THE OPEN DOOR

HUGH BLACK

OCT 16 1933

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The Open Door

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The Open Door

By

HUGH BLACK

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LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 125 North Wabash Ave.
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

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I

The Open Door

Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!

—*Robert Browning.*

I

THE OPEN DOOR

HE purpose of this book is to suggest a certain attitude towards the world and life. The common figure of speech, "The Open Door," chosen for the title, indicates this general attitude. It expresses the spirit of hope with which we may face the future in every region of human endeavour. Man has not exhausted his experiences. The universe has not ended its experiments. There are no impassable limits anywhere. When we think we have charted the complete region and have found the confines, there is a way out into something bigger, an open door into a larger world.

In every age man thinks he has about reached the limits and begins to make a snug nest for himself in a world which he understands—when he finds the limits are stretched and he

must readjust himself to a larger environment. We like incidents that are closed, and conditions that are settled, and subjects whose boundaries are fixed. But we discover that nothing will remain closed, and settled, and fixed. We think of situations, and we find that there are not any such, but only *movements*. We learn —or we should learn—that we are living in a world where nothing is static.

At first this is disquieting. When we would settle down, with our thinking done, with our religion fixed, with our social conditions permanent, with everything pigeonholed and orderly, we are indignant or distressed that we are not left in peace. Some new knowledge or new experience demands that our thinking be done over again, or that our religious propositions be revised, or that our industrial and social conditions be amended. Soon we realize that this is our hope, instead of our despair. It makes for courage to see that new knowledge is always open to us, and new experiences are always in store for us, and new conditions are always possible to us. The mood that suits the fact is one of faith and expect-

ancy. The door is ever open to the sons of man.

We used to think of the world *in terms of statics*. It was looked on as a hard inert mass which shaped us and which we could do little to shape. If we did not submit to let it shape us it would break us, the poor pigmies of earth. The world was a rigid thing with fixed boundaries. It was stationary, with definite laws. Our only part was to learn these laws and submit to them like the inflexible rules of a game. We could do nothing to them except submit, and if we did not submit they did definite things to us.

There was, above all, a very solid and rigid thing called matter. Dr. Johnston's argument against an idealistic philosophy consisted of stamping his solid foot on the ground, and common sense everywhere felt that he had triumphantly disposed of the question. Now even the solid ground is falling away from such solid feet. Matter itself is no longer being viewed as rigid mass. Science has gradually been analyzing it, first into molecules and atoms, but to older science the atom was itself

a rigid thing like infinitesimal bullets by which was built up the substantial universe. Newer science carries the analysis further to æons and electrons, and all modern speculation and investigation go frankly on the theory that the constitution of matter is electrical. There seems nothing rigid and stable and stationary in all the universe.

We are thus learning to think of the world, not in terms of statics, but *in terms of dynamics.* Everywhere we are touching not dead, inert mass, but living, moving force. Everywhere we are dealing with something pliable and plastic, with frontiers that shift and that can be shifted. The world we inhabit is not a rigid thing with changeless boundaries and fixed limits. The mind of man does encounter limits in every region where it pushes, but the limits are not always the same. Indeed they are not limits to the world, but limits to the mind of man. Ever there appears an open door leading out, so that a portion of the unknown gets swept into the confines of the known.

It is so much easier for us to deal with the

static, that we never are cured of our heresy of treating things as if they "stayed put." When some new wonder of the living universe comes to us we are disturbed for a time, but at last reach peace by classifying it and putting it away as a new fact in our museum. But the world is not fixed like a museum, though we are always tempted to treat it so. We think the account is closed, and have handy little compartments to stow away things. We have a scheme of things which we call the natural, and if we allow anything else we call it the supernatural. The natural is usually conceived of as a fixed domain with no open doors out from it.

At every stage of human life there is the bare crude fact, the solid basis of experience, the things we know and count on. Above that is the unattained, which the ordinary man thinks is also the unattainable. As a matter of fact the level is always shifting. When a new experience takes place or new facts are learned, the hitherto impossible becomes possible and at last becomes commonplace. It gets its place in our museum. We accept the new level of ex-

perience as a matter of course and try to get things stable and stationary once more. We have even a definite picture of what we call the "real world," and all else is treated as visionary, until we can deny it no longer.

When the telephone was invented, most men found it hard to conceive that it could even be possible to speak a thousand miles so as to recognize the very tones of a friend's voice. If an eager believer spoke of it, he was told that was not the real world but a dreamer's idea of the actual. The actual was what we knew, and we knew that it had never been done. I will never forget the thrill when I received my first marconigram five hundred miles from land, and I realized that wireless telegraphy had become an established fact in the world. Ocean-goers now send and receive messages as a matter of course, and have got back to their static universe. When wireless telegraphy was first spoken of, men smiled at the absurdity, as if it were either a practical joke or the madness of a dreamer. It did not belong to the *real world.*

What is the real world? Is it the world as men thought of it yesterday, or as we think of

it to-day, or as it will be viewed to-morrow? Our habit of treating it as something fixed seems almost incurable. In most ages the world has been for man like a prison, ample and roomy even with pleasure grounds attached, but still a prison. If he goes far enough in any direction he comes to a hard stone wall, against which he will only hurt himself if he butts his head. To much ancient wisdom the one secret of happiness is for a man to learn the limits and keep carefully within them. It is as old as Ecclesiastes to say that it is a mistake to be over-wise, or for that part over-righteous.

Everything in our day which has compelled us to reconstruct our intellectual life was here in every previous day. Man never invents anything: he can only discover. An invention is merely the application of a discovery. To discover is simply to disclose what actually is. Electricity, radioactivity, X-rays, were in the world always. The forces which men are now harnessing and using have ever been here, only there were no men with knowledge enough to appreciate the fact. Who can set limits to

what is? Who can draw a line and declare that within it lies all that is possible? Who can say what forces there are unknown, one day it may be to be utilized by the sons of men? The world is not one definite thing, but is whatever we men, with knowledge and courage and faith, are able to make it. When we reach the borders, there is ever an open door into a larger place. The world is just as big as we are big enough to inhabit.

Like all true things this is not completely new. We have always known it in other regions. Æsthetically the world is to each what he is able to appreciate. How different a single scene may appear to different views, since the eye sees what capacity and knowledge and training give it the power to see. As an American naturalist put it, you must have the bird in your heart before you can see it in the bush. Buttercups and daisies, the common flowers of the field, may be a delight to a child and a nuisance to a farmer. A single flower is one thing to a botanist, another to an artist, another to a market-gardener, and another to a lover.

William Blake the poet and artist said in his old age to a little girl, "My dear, may God make this world as beautiful to you as it has been to me."

Recently, looking at a picture in front of the landscape it depicted, I asked the artist if he saw all that colour on that hillside, and he replied, "For years I have lived with and loved that hill, and every year I see new colour in it." His eyes were sharpened by knowledge and sympathy. To uncultured eyes there are only a few crude colours and a general dull gray tone. There is a true sense in which it may be said that we make our own world. Every common thing may be viewed, according to the angle of vision, in a hundred different lights. Life itself, which to one man is the dullest prose, may be to another a country of romance. To one there are no surprises of beauty, and not even anything new, only the accustomed scene. To another there is a new world born every new day.

If this is true in regions like those of science and of art, it is also true morally and spiritually. Two boys may grow up in the same town, in

the same street, even in the same house, and inhabit two different moral worlds. The outlook on life determines the life. To one man there are no far horizons, no stainless peaks, no adventures of the soul. To another life is a house of many mansions, and the doors are ever open. Intellectually, as we saw, the world is the product of forces, which if we discover we can manipulate and use, and knowledge means pushing back the frontier. Morally, also, life is the product of forces, which also need to be apprehended and applied.

Life to most of us is made up almost entirely of custom and tradition. It has hardened into set forms, so that it is no longer flexible. This is why there are so often those periods of lull in the history of human progress which daunt the heart of its champions. It is so hard to get men to see where the door is open, and harder to get them to attempt the entry. They prefer to settle back on the accustomed, and refuse the risk of change. Progress everywhere is checked because we are so ready to get back to the static. It is not easy to remain accessible to new views or tenets, and to keep free from preju-

dice. So also in the region of morality it is difficult to keep the heights which the soul is competent to gain, until at last it becomes difficult even to believe that there are heights at all.

True education means keeping the passage-way clear. The biggest thing we can do for another is simply to open a door, or rather to show him where the door is open, out to a larger knowledge, a broader sympathy, a fuller life. This alone is education, not spoon-feeding with information, but deepening the insight and widening the outlook. In the growth and development of a child, we see how doors begin to open as life goes on. The world seems to press in by every avenue, claiming attention, enticing to adventure. It acts through ear-gate and eye-gate and touch-gate, through the gates of the senses and then the sensibilities, through the emotions and the mind, through the imagination and the heart and all the gifts of man's great nature. Life is the opening of doors into this rich world of God's and man's.

Too soon we let the sense of wonder die, and we lose the very attitude of expectancy which

makes us use opportunity when it comes. We do not let life lead us into the further ways even when we possess opportunity. For example, the mastery of a new language should mean gaining entrance into a new world of thought and experience. To many, however, a foreign tongue is an end in itself and not a means—a discipline only and not an open door leading out to new scenery. This cripples much of our education. The schoolboy reads Cæsar as a task and rarely is taught to look upon it as a *book*, to introduce him to a new world, all the more new that it is so old.

Similarly, a new experience should open the way to a larger life. It should bring fresh insight, and wider interest, and keener sympathy. Many do not *use* the new experience, but only *enjoy* it. A great happiness will sometimes come to a man and he will rejoice in it, but yet he may not let it enlarge his life. Strangely enough we sometimes find it only narrowing him. So a sorrow, which we would expect to soften and deepen, will often only harden and embitter. We do not always learn the true lesson of the Open Door. We

forget that we are pilgrims of the way, whose experiences should enrich. An experience is not merely something that we have to pass through, but something that should remain with us as one of the spoils of life.

A new idea, also, ought to unlock a door where the whole horizon is broadened. The idea will come to many, at last indeed is presented in some shape to all, but not all treat it alike. Some meet the new idea only to be afraid of it and oppose it. Others receive it hospitably, but only to add it as another fact, like adding a rare kind of beetle to a collection. It ought to be a key to open the gates to a richer comprehension.

The history of the idea of evolution gives ample illustration of all these attitudes. Many met it with fear, and opposed it with hatred, and tried to kill it with cheap ridicule. Some examined the proof of it candidly and accepted it as a further fact. Fewer still were willing to follow its leading into the wonderful and beautiful world to which it led. Even now we do not candidly and courageously accept its implications. It is too dynamic for the static

universe we love to conceive ourselves as inhabiting. It shatters too many illusions and compels too radical a reconstruction of our intellectual world. We use it to trace out the past, and find it handy for explaining history, but we will not apply it to our fundamental thinking. Our philosophical and theological and political and social systems might be disintegrated too swiftly, if such dynamite were put under them. Yet more and more men are learning that nowhere in the universe is there dead mass but everywhere living force. They turn to the future with the outlook of hope, as night-watchers turn to the red dawn.

Socially, also, this attitude of outlook is necessary for a noble and progressive communal life. We see a door open, where before there seemed none. Opportunity emerges for juster laws, and cleaner environment, and finer life for all. Among the signs of our time, for instance, there is the new Peace movement. This generation seriously proposes the abolition of war. Some see the vision and take a share in creating public sentiment about it. Of course

we are told it cannot be done, as the same kind of man said the same thing about duelling. Some assume that it is an impossible dream that cannot apply to the real world. What is the real world, anyway, to which they refer? If we got an answer to that question, we would find that they were ignorant of the actual forces which are beginning to dominate the world of modern human life. We would find that they do not know what modern democracy means, and take no thought of its dynamic influence as a spiritual motive.

The whole Democratic movement of our time is an open door to all the brave hearts that recognize it as the dawning of a better day. Many fear it and many condemn, some surely because they misunderstand and misjudge it. It is easy to criticize a great world-movement by fastening on incidental weaknesses. It is easy to make it ludicrous by speaking of getting wisdom by counting noses. Democracy does not mean that, nor does it mean a monotonous dead level of equality. It means faith in essential humanity, the opening of doors to all who can enter. Its ideal is a

world of *persons*, each able to make the full contribution of his whole personality to the world. We should rejoice that the way is being cleared for a juster state of society and for true coöperation.

> It may be false, but will you wish it true?
> Has it your vote to be so if it can?

There are always doubters and tremblers and followers of tradition, who tell us of all the difficulties, the lions in the path. There are defenders of every social order as sacred, who dread change. In every region of thought and activity we are almost strangled by the incubus of tradition, till we are tempted or forced to shake it off, and at last move to the lure of the Open Door.

In our own day the forces of reaction have been weakened by so many shocks that there is even a danger of false hope, though any kind of hope is better than indifference or despair. There is a thrill of expectancy in the air, which makes this age an intensely interesting one in which to live. Of course dangers attend this

attitude. Men become impatient of old positions, and despair of exact thinking, and let the emotional swamp the intellectual. Instead of a reasoned faith they sometimes substitute a mushy optimism, with no groundwork of experience and no basis of fact. The expectancy of our time is the fruit of the changes that have already taken place, and the changes in turn create a new expectancy. We may be tempted to hasten the speed unduly or to make rash experiments. Every thoughtful observer knows that we have a vast program ahead of us. Even to the most casual eye the race is on the threshold of change greater than any yet known.

One danger is to lose grip of fact and to assume that change spells progress. Human life cannot live permanently up in the air. We need to gather and conserve our gains, and we cannot afford to let go the painfully achieved treasures of past experience. We must keep our feet on fact. To live in a state of gaseous uplift only invites the certain shock of the down-drop. We may have cause to believe that the constitution of matter is electrical,

but mass remains as a fact of experience and the earth still remains a pretty solid thing to fall on. The open door to man does not mean that nothing is closed. It does not mean that anybody can move anywhere unimpeded. There are laws that condition entry and that allow no exceptions. The most hopeless mood is the weak optimism that shuts the eyes to facts.

Another danger is that some eager souls may think that the promised land is just round the corner, and when disappointed of this hope may be too sorely disillusioned. They have not calculated the strength of the opposing forces and the inertia of human nature. Knowledge of the past should inform them of some of the inevitable obstacles, and should prepare them for some of the repulses and the patient waiting which the champions of progress must suffer. On the other hand, knowledge of the past should bring encouragement, as we look back over the long way by which we have come. The restless seeking of man has ever led him out into a larger place, and it would be craven of us to turn back from the long passion. Darkness has been dissipated by

light, ignorance has given way before knowledge, apathy has blossomed into love, and the redemption is nearer than when we first believed.

What should the parable of the Open Door mean to us but courage and hope? The true mood is that of adventure. There is a high and noble curiosity, allied to courage, which has blazed the trail for others. This eager seeking of the soul has been responsible for all the gains of the race. We are saved by hope. To know that there is something unattained and to believe that it is not therefore unattainable has been the lode-star to progress. On the whole we fail in moral courage, we do not believe enough, and do not expect enough. We look back with admiration on periods when human life has flowered. We see times when a group of men have been quickened and have laid the world under eternal debt by the beauty and strength of their thought. Height called to height and deep replied to deep, and mind and soul caught flame and spread it, and the miracle of life happened. Even in a single

city why should we never expect again the ferment of mind which produced the Athens of Socrates and the Florence of Dante and the London of Shakespeare? The world has ever been saved by the kingly men who have made adventure of soul, carrying the freight of the spirit.

We look through the long vista of doors that have been opened in the past and take courage for the venture of our day of opportunity. Amid the flux and flow of circumstance, through the changes of history, over the long road of the ascent of life, we see the unfolding of purpose. The past exists for the future, and we can believe that the future will explain the past and justify the present. The door stands open wide.

A fire-mist and a planet,—
A crystal and a cell,—
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod,—
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.

II

The Laws of the Open Door

It is fit things be stated and considered as they are.

—*Bishop Butler.*

II

THE LAWS OF THE OPEN DOOR

NE of the most potent influences of our time that has made for change is the relaxing of authority. We see it everywhere, in education, in religion, in the family, and in the state. It is evident in every region both of thought and of practical life. The breakdown of authority is the natural result of the breakdown of static conditions. Nowhere can we appeal with the old dogmatism to established traditions, and to truths delivered once for all in changeless form. The world has broken away from its moorings. The point of view suggested by our figure of the Open Door acts like an acid to disintegrate all fixed systems. If we learn to look at the world and life in terms of dynamics and no longer in terms of statics, we are done with immutability anywhere.

We frankly recognize the dangers of the very

mood we are encouraging in this book. It undoubtedly means the weakening of old authority, and there are places where a blind step may mean a step into the abyss. The first lesson surely is that our steps should not be blind. It is sometimes assumed that this doctrine of the Open Door means that there are no penalties, and that all we need to do is to move gaily forward making any kind of experiment in life without risk. If we walk up confidently to any obstacle it will obligingly remove itself, and when we come to a stubborn barrier a way through opens up as by magic. We must learn that there is nothing magical in the world, that this is not a casual but a *causal* universe.

The problem is that human life must have some sort of authority on which it can rest and build. How to get it, if everywhere we are touching moving force and never dead mass? If everything changes and we change with it, if reality is like a stream and we are in the stream, where can we find anything which we can call permanent? Well, we must frankly build on experience, and if it needs faith to believe that experience itself is not illusion, we

are compelled to exercise that faith. This is necessary for sane life.

The first law of the Open Door may be called the *law of faith.* Fundamentally it means trust in the sanity and order and purposiveness of the universe. Without this faith, we are appalled at the littleness of man before the greatness of the world's forces. Man is crushed by a sense of insignificance. We with our larger knowledge of infinite space feel even more awed than the ancient poet who looked up into the eastern sky at night and said,

When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars which Thou didst establish,
What is man that Thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man that Thou visitest him?

Modern man feels even more acutely the contrast between the worm man and the armies of the sky. Only a sense of spiritual values, only faith in the worth of man's life, can swing back the balance from despair.

The sea is very large and our boat is very

small, but the boat fits the sea. It can be made to sail. The laws and facts of the sea can be harnessed to serve the purposes of the boat. Indeed the biggest fact of the sea is the fact of the boat. The boat is at the mercy of the sea, but is also the sea's master and dominates it for human ends. The universe is unfathomable, full of mystery, cruel in its impassiveness, and human life with its history and achievements is very weak and small. It is like a speck on the vast ocean. But the biggest fact of the world is the fact of man. He alone is conscious of the contrast between the puny single species and the majesty of the whole.

Pascal describes man feeble as a reed which it does not need the universe to crush. "But he is a reed *that thinks*, and were the whole universe to crush him he is above that which destroys him; for he knows that he dies and that which crushes him knows nothing." If only to keep the gains of the past, man is compelled to believe in himself. He must believe that he has a destiny, as he has a history. Man alone is conscious of his history, and can look back over the long way with pride. There

seems to be meaning and purpose in that romantic story. Nowhere do we see human life in a hopeless *cul-de-sac*—a blind alley without outlet. Somewhere it issues out into a larger place. Somewhere a door opens to further experience and fuller life. To deny such a future is to put a full stop to the story. Without this faith, life would be a torso, whose general appearance is uncommonly like a grotesque.

Is it all for nothing that man has striven and suffered? Is it all for nothing that the race has endured its long agony, and thrilled to its noble joys? Have all the triumphs of man's history, his deepening self-knowledge, his progressive control of natural forces, his social achievements in building up a rational communal life, been only nothing better than illusion? Man will never believe that, or when he does it will be at last the race-suicide. As he looks back he thinks he sees doors opening leading ever to the light, and he believes that he will not come to a place where there is no passage. If ever he comes where there is no passage that way, he feels sure that there is a passage some other way.

All a brave man needs is this simple faith that

he is not in a hopeless *cul-de-sac*, that he will not die like a rat in a hole. Even if he die, his death will count for something, as he thinks his life counted for something. Let him see that spot of blue where invites the open door, and he can withstand in the evil day and having done all can still stand. All he asks for is the wages of going on. Sometimes faith is only another name for courage, in which man takes life in his hand as he makes the great venture.

The first law of the Open Door then is the law of faith. We believe that the door is open, and that it is open for us. We can win through, if we will. We can trust the world, and life, and self, and the future. The religious man means all this when he says we can trust God. The universe may be a riddle as it has often been called, but the riddle of the universe is at least not a farce. We must trust the world, in order to live. We must believe that the world has meaning and purpose at its core, in order to live a man's life. This fundamental faith carries with it faith in the future. We may not know—we do not know —anything but that a clear road invites our

feet. We do not need to know any more than that. Indeed, it is part of the attraction of life that it should come to us as an adventure.

The world has been lifted forward by the goodly succession of adventurers, who went forth not knowing whither they went. Columbus putting a theory to the test finds a new world. The astronomer, working out a hypothesis, sees a new planet swim into his ken. Men of science extend the bounds of knowledge in a spirit of adventure. Teachers are content if at last they find students, into whose hands they can put the torch to carry it on and it may be to light other flames. The task of education, and its glory, is not merely to transmit knowledge and build up an intellectual system of discipline, but to inspire, and to kindle a flame which will illumine the path for all the world. We look far through time to get the distant interest of all true investment. All education worth the name has a spiritual source, and a spiritual end. It lives by vision, and works through insight and outlook, lifting the eyes to wider horizons.

"The door is open," said the ancient stoic.

He meant that there was a way of escape from intolerable fate. His unconquerable soul had always a last refuge. When things got to the worst, when he could stand no more, when the burden grew too heavy and life had become insufferable, the door was open. He meant in a plain word, Suicide. There was a way out from under the burden, a way *down and out.* It is the refuge of despair, a pagan solution of the problem of life. The fact that so often men and women of our day find easy recourse to the same way of escape is proof that there are still pagan elements in our modern society. Set over against that despairing word the same word interpreted by faith, "The door is open." It becomes a word of hope and courage and comfort and power. Instead of a way down and out, there is a way *up and out.*

This is the message of religion, if the implications of faith are frankly accepted. It should issue in peace and hope and joy. Too often religion is treated as narrow and cramping, something that will dwarf our powers, and imprison us, and cut off our rightful joy. It is looked on as if it would hamper life, and narrow

it down into a small corner. Whereas, it is the biggest and widest thing that can come into a man's life, ennobling every faculty and glorifying every power. It should lead a man out into a large place, till he feels he is standing in the Supreme Will, so that with a pure heart he can serve his generation e'er he too fall on sleep.

Take as illustration the obvious open door before this generation of social and industrial reconstruction. It is natural that there should be some timidity before a great change, even when we recognize that the change is inevitable. Some allow their fears to swallow up their courage, till the only forward look they have is one of dread. Others of the privileged classes harden their hearts in selfish possession, determined to resist to the last all that seems to disturb their comfort. There is a new order to be born out of the new stirrings of life, and in what temper should it be met? Surely in that of faith, which not only believes that the change will result in better conditions, but also which believes that because it believes in man. It sees that the civilization which does not

afford its members the opportunity to become their best selves is a failure. It believes that as of old God is calling His sons out of Egypt, and that the way to the Promised Land will open, though it be through the sea and the desert.

For our comfort in facing the change, it should be remembered that the world has never known anything but change. We have been born into our present order, and we forget how recent it is. We think of it as somehow permanent and with the sacredness of the established about it. As a matter of fact it is only of yesterday, and is merely one of the ceaseless experiments of man in society. Even if our present condition were satisfactory to more of us than it is, we could safely argue from history that it could not last indefinitely. When added to that, we have a condition seething with righteous discontent, full of stupid absurdities as well as of cruel wrongs, we know that the time for change is ripe. Indeed the change is already going on. Everywhere democracy is beginning to sweep the world, and the dispossessed classes are entering into

political power. Willingly or unwillingly we are moving to an open door that will bring us to a change of scene. In high faith and in the courage of faith we look hopefully and longingly to the better day, trusting in the destiny of man and in the purpose of God.

The second law of the Open Door may be called the *law of fitness*. The faith with which we face the future must be disciplined and rational, must know whereof it speaks. The temper of faith and hope is better in any case than that of indifference or despair, but if it be a sloppy trust that things are going to turn out all right, it will only lead to the morass? Faith needs to be informed by fact, and inspired by knowledge. It needs to be corrected and tested by experience, even when it looks for new experience. A vague Micawber-like confidence that somehow fortune will look after things is doomed to failure. That is to treat the world as a gamble, and if we do we will discover that we play against loaded dice. The universe is not so constructed that if a man opens his mouth to the sky, larks already

roasted will obligingly fall into it. That would make it a foolish world for man, and an impossible one for larks. We can never make anything of the open door, until we dismiss resolutely our childish dreams of chance happenings.

There are many so-called chance discoveries, but on investigation we usually find that they were made by those who had put themselves in the way. Thousands of others had met the same chance, but never saw it, or if they did were by previous bent unable to do anything with it. The *luck* goes to the good player, as every golfer knows. When a man is fit, everything comes his way. An opportunity goes a-begging for years, till the man who can use it comes along. The discovery was always possible, when the conditions of it were met. We tell tales of Galileo being led to his experiments about falling bodies by the fact that the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa was handy for such experiments, but the Leaning Tower could have suggested it to any one else. In the life of Galileo it is related how one day in the Cathedral he noticed a bronze lamp suspended

by a long cord swinging slowly before the altar. During the singing he noticed that though naturally the lamp slackened its vibration, it always beat in the same time, and from that he was led to begin his researches on the motion of the pendulum. But everybody in Pisa and elsewhere had seen a lamp swing. Or the story is told of Newton in his garden at Woolsthorpe seeing an apple fall to the ground and having suggested to him his researches on the force of gravity. But millions of apples had fallen, and some had even bumped the heads of men, with little enough suggestion. The time was fit, when the man was fit.

This does not mean that it is always personal fitness that leads to the open door. What we may call *social fitness* is an even more important factor. Without this a single discovery, even if made, would signify little and could not be conserved. It is possible for a man to be before his age, born out of due time, though there are countless more cases of men who are behind their age. What usually happens is that the world had arrived at the stage where a reach forward was possible and even inevi-

table. All men who have achieved anything are the first to recognize that they built on the labours of others. Previous work had so advanced the subject that contemporary thought and experiment found the further step easy. This is the explanation of the fact that often a discovery is made independently by different people almost simultaneously, like Darwin and Wallace with the evolution hypothesis. A certain thing is in the air as we say, and men everywhere are working on it, feeling towards it, and when one takes the right step, behold there is an open door. Flying machines have been "in the air" for a much longer time than any machine has been. The story of any achievement is one of much obscure romance, and there are names on the roll of honour of which the public is ignorant. Sometimes the man, to whom comes the fame or the fortune, has done the minor part of the work.

Especially true is this of the great movements which have profoundly affected mankind. Lord Acton was preparing nearly all his life to write the History of Liberty and died without having done it. One hardly

wonders that he should have been appalled at the task; for it would have meant writing practically the history of man. What open doors generation after generation have been passed through in the enfranchisement of man's mind and life. Sometimes we speak as if liberty were an American, or an English, or an Anglo-Saxon achievement. When some crisis in that history comes, and a new triumph is recorded, it is seen to be the work of no one man. In every world movement there is the same almost impersonal note. No single man was responsible for the Renaissance, and no single man produced the Reformation. The modern democratic movement is impressive, because it calls no man father, and needs no sponsor. It too comes because the time is ripe, and the time has been ripened through new compunctions of conscience, and new stirrings of desire, and new movements of life.

But no door opens through a magic word, or because people idly wish it. This law of fitness has to be emphasized to-day, because so many have a bland creed that everything is

going to be all right anyway. We hear men loudly proclaiming that they believe in progress, and that the world has ever been growing better and must ever grow better. One may have cause to believe such a statement in the general without subscribing to every application of it. All change has not been progress, and there can be degeneracy as well as advance. A general proposition may be true and have many exceptions in detail. A flowing tide can have many recessions and times when it looks like ebb instead of flow. It has been said by way of confidence in the ultimate future of America that the man who "goes bear on America goes broke." It is a graphic way of describing a general trust in the country's destiny, but sometimes the phrase has been used merely to boom a rise in the Stock Exchange. One can believe in the business future of a country, and yet know that the most favoured land can have times of depression.

The soft creed of inevitable progress is an offense to all who desire to know and accept facts. The worst of it is that such a temper

delays true progress, if it does not destroy the very chance of progress. If we take to thinking of liberty as something that is bound to come as if it were ground out automatically, we endanger liberty itself, forgetting that its price is eternal vigilance. That is the price of anything worth having—the price of knowledge, of material and intellectual and moral advance. It is the law of the Open Door. Instead of inevitable progress in human affairs, our actual experience is the opposite. There is a constant tendency to settle and sink. If we leave a garden alone, we soon learn what happens to the choicest flowers. If we leave any institution or condition of social life alone, we soon find it in the quagmire. The degradation of the best is always the worst kind of corruption. If we leave ourselves alone, we slide back to lower levels of thought and of practice. It may be a commonplace to say that there is no standing still for life, but it is none the less true. The life that does not move forward goes backward. It is not enough to have a pious faith in progress. To the faith must be added patience and knowl-

edge, the qualities that save the faith from shame.

Man has indeed learned to fly—or is learning—but he never learned, and never would have learned by throwing himself off a pinnacle, even of the temple. The only way man could ever learn to fly was to understand the problem, and master the laws, and manipulate the forces at his disposal. Many things come to him in his long search to fathom the laws that govern the phenomena of nature and to understand the reason of things. The world is truly as big as man is big enough to inhabit and he has not yet taken possession of one tithe of his inheritance, but more important than believing in the bigness of his task is it to become big enough to undertake it. It is more important, simply because the one is the condition of the other. We take an immense step in every region of endeavour when we accept simply and humbly the fact that we have to do with a causal and never with a casual universe.

Thus, we dare not let go our hold on experience. Experience really means the results of experiment, the acquired and tested facts.

Fortunately we are not confined to our own single experience, but have the vast body of human experience on which to fall back for guidance and correction. Not as on something sacred and immovable, a fetish to clog our souls and our feet, but simply as we do in every branch of natural science. In science there has grown up a body of experiments, which we are glad to accept, but which if need be we hold the right to test again and to extend, and from which we may draw different conclusions should new facts warrant it. So in the practice of life there has grown up a body of experiments, which has valid authority for us. There are some assured gains, facts that may be accepted, and principles that are certain. It is sometimes a little amusing, and oftener more pathetic, to hear men loudly proclaiming as a panacea something that the world has already tried out. Instead of *marriage* as we have it, they suggest a relationship which seems a rare and novel improvement, and appear amazed at their daring and original thinking. All who know anything of history know that it is only a reversion to type. The world has gone through that very

stage, and nature in her ruthless way of eliminating the unfit has declared that there is no passage that way.

In the individual life also the law of fitness applies. Previous attainment conditions further progress. The future is what the past makes possible. Hope is indeed a good companion, but rather a poor guide. Idle hope, with no backing of experience and no reserve of knowledge, will only once more illustrate the parable of the blind leading the blind. Mere wishing will never find any open doors, or if it does will not know what to make of them. If it were only a choice between hope and fear, there would be no hesitation as to which were better; since it is better even to be duped by hope than to be betrayed by fear. But we are not confined to these alternatives. Hope may be informed and inspired by experience, leading ever to new triumphs.

In Bunyan's classic allegory, perhaps the most attractive character is Hopeful, who made the way bright for his companion as well as for himself. There is also Mr. Fearing, one of the

most troublesome pilgrims that Great-heart the guide ever had to do with. Great-heart's description of the poor chicken-hearted man is a masterpiece. He had lain roaring at the Slough of Despond for about a month, until one sunshiny morning he ventured and so got over, but when he was over he would scarce believe it. He had a Slough of Despond in his mind. At the entrance gate to the way and then at the Interpreter's door he behaved himself in the same fashion, shaking and shrinking, though he had the root of the matter in him; for with all his trembling he would never turn tail and go back. "When he was come to the entrance of the Valley of the Shadow of Death I thought I should have lost my man," says his guide. But Mr. Fearing did win through after a rather dismal journey, making mournful music for himself and others, only able to play on one string. In Bunyan's incomparable gallery of portraits there is another called Ignorance, a very brisk lad from the Country of Conceit. He seemed to find everything easy, and walked along comfortably with his mind full of good motions. When the other pilgrims asked for

the grounds of his easy assurance and tried to inform him, he replied, "That is your faith but not mine, yet mine I doubt not is as good as yours, though I have not in my head so many whimsies as you." With all his sprightly assurance, poor Ignorance, who would not learn of any one, came to a bad end. When he came to the Door, it was closed to him.

The law of fitness means that to him that hath shall be given—a paradox which is true along the whole line of life. There is a correspondence between past achievement and future opportunity, between what a man has done and what he will get to do. There is even correspondence between what he has attempted and what he will be given to try, between the spirit of his past endeavour and the new occasions that will come his way. The man who has been faithful over a few things becomes the ruler over larger things. Whatever be the endowment of the talents, whether ten or five or one, if careful use of them is made, as a result larger opportunities are afforded, and the promise of a fuller life is held out. There

comes a new accession of power, a new occasion for practice, a new enlightenment into opportunity, a new entrance into the spacious places of life.

This is the natural principle of promotion that we use in all our social affairs. If a man makes good in any line of business, he is not rewarded by being laid on the shelf, but by getting some bigger task to perform. Education is graded to lead on from achievement to achievement. The principle runs not only through the business and the intellectual life, but also through the moral life. Spiritual promotion goes far more surely on this natural principle than even promotion in business does; for only to him that hath can it be given. This principle is in the nature of things; it is the way the world is built. We may trust the moral world, the whole life of man, on that basis. It is the law of the Open Door. The soul that has sincerely tried to be faithful can look for other chances to be faithful. If we have walked according to our light, we will get fuller light. If we have entered into past opportunities, we may expect new ones. The

moral world will not go back on us. The future will contain nothing that is inconsistent with the past. None can prevent us from entering into our inheritance, and we may go in boldly to take possession. The door is open.

III

The Shut Door

Ah, the past, the pearl-gift thrown
To hogs; time's opportunity we made
So light of, only recognized when flown.

—*Robert Browning.*

III

THE SHUT DOOR

HERE is a slushy optimism, which lays hold of the hopeful point of view we are also recommending, but which pays no heed to any facts that seem to contradict it. From the last chapter, which states the laws of true hope, it will be seen that at least we do not seek to live in that Fools' Paradise. It is a poor ostrich trick to hide the head in the sand, thinking that if we refuse to see the impending evil it will cease to be. Yet it is a common trick. In the scholastic cant of our time many seem to think that the word "psychological" explains everything. As if things must be in reality as they are in our minds, and as if the universe accommodated itself to our view of it! It is of course only the exaggeration of a fact. We do have power over our lives, and we live in a world which is largely our own creation. A bright and cheer-

ful spirit will find much to feed cheer on. A gloomy and fearful nature, which expects trouble, will get a good deal of what it expects. But important as all this is for the happy conduct of life, it does not alter the fact that we are in a certain universal order, which does not budge for all our wishing. It will budge all right, when we know how to make it. Gravitation will not cease to work, merely because we would like to fly. The only way to fly is to *use* gravitation, by playing off against it some other forces we have learned.

Cheap optimism thinks that if things are not going our way, all we need to do is to form a Sunshine Club, and keep smiling and "boosting." If we keep on saying it is all right and is going to be all right, then it will be as we say. It is a pretty good thing to have a smile on the lips and cheer in the heart, provided that we do not look on these as a quack medicine to cure all. It was a great English theologian, and not as we might have expected a scientist, who suggested the reign of law in the simple phrase, "things are what they are, and their consequences will be what they will be."

There still remains of course the task of finding out what they really are, but we are not much helped in that by merely putting on rose-coloured spectacles to view them. There is one way of reaching a pleasant conclusion by eliminating everything that tells against us, but it is not a way of courage. It is of a piece with the common practice of finding comfort by ignoring everything around us of squalor and ugliness, and by resolutely excluding everything that will not come sedately into our colour scheme.

Our insistence of the Open Door as the fit figure for human life might be thought to be ministering to such shallow optimism. When we point to the forward look, and to man as the master and not merely the victim of his fate, when we glorify opportunity, it may be asked if there are no shut doors, no inexorable barriers, no opportunities that are closed. Indeed there are, and it is from the stern and tragic background of the deprivation of life that we would fain set the hope that saves. Whatever may still be available, there are some things irrevocable. Not even tears can wash

away the writing of the Moving Finger, when once it sets down the recorded fact.

At some times of our life we are entranced by the opening of doors, by the romance of the unknown that seems ever approaching us. On every side there are avenues reaching out, unfolding fresh vistas of thought and feeling and experience. It is a rich and large world we inhabit, and there seems no end to what we can be and do. In the buoyancy of hope we never dream that disappointment can lie for us at the end of any path we may choose, that there can be for us ultimate failure in any line. If anything we are embarrassed by the richness of our opportunities, and we hardly know what to be at, or what road to take. Doors open at a touch. Body and mind and heart and soul are feeling for their possibilities, giving us hints of pleasant adventures and satisfying experiences.

The unfolding of the powers of youth suggest many worlds to conquer, and it does not matter much with which we begin. There is plenty of time and we will have plenty of opportuni-

ties. If this does not do, we can try something else. If this road we are traversing does not suit, there will be many a crossroad into which we can turn ; or even we can go back and begin over again. In youth life is long and very spacious. Doors and ways keep opening in most pleasant fashion, as they do to the knight-errant in chivalry or to the hero in fairy-land. We cannot think that any road will lead us to a standstill, or if it does that it will not be a simple thing to retrace our steps and try our luck again. We cannot imagine ourselves without resources, helpless in the face of circumstances. The pathos of hope! To the contemplative mind there is nothing so beautiful, and perhaps nothing so sad, as this buoyant mood. "If youth only knew: if age only could," is an old French saying.

It is perhaps just as well that youth does not know; for if youth did know, youth might never try, and everybody would be the loser, both youth and age and the world at large. It would be fatal if youth knew, in the sense of believing that nothing was worth a venture and that eventual disappointment awaits every

effort. That is false doctrine, stifling high hope at its birth, and sapping the strength of noble life. It is youth that keeps the world alive, not merely in the prosaic material sense, but in the spiritual sense also that we depend upon the supply of vigour and courage and faith and hope from men, who do not calculate results, and who go gaily into the fight. It is pitiful folly, or worse, to be ever crooning vanity of vanities as the one burden of the song of life. "If youth only knew," what then would be our counsel? To depress hope and take the heart out of courage, to preach the blasé creed that everything ends in vexation of spirit, and that there is nothing better than that a man should cultivate a cautious moderate Epicureanism? If that is the fruit of worldly wisdom and the experience of age, then indeed it would be folly to be wise.

Still there are some things which it would be well for youth to know, in order that its energies might be directed into the right channels; and one of them is the lesson that opportunities are not endless, and that occasions can be lost, and a door, which seems always open to be

entered when it suits, may at last be shut. "Experience is a good school," says Jean Paul Richter, "but the fees are high." Yes, the fees are high, and they may be too high. They have a way of getting higher. The price becomes prohibitive. The fees may be so high that though we have got the experience all right, we may not be able to buy one single opportunity of using the experience. A door may be shut which will not open to bribes, or threats, or pleadings, or tears. If youth only knew this, it would be worth knowing, not that it may be made to despair, but that it may be made serious, accepting its great opportunities and its solemn responsibilities. It is wise to learn truth and to accept actual facts; and this is the absolute truth, a fact of daily experience, that there are things which are irrevocable, beyond recall, beyond another chance, and when we come up for another chance we find that the door is shut.

The first natural illustration of this is the very passage of *time* itself. Sentimentally once a year we are reminded of this, as the

shadows of the dying year deepen around us. There is of course nothing in the passage of the last day of the old year into the first day of the new year—nothing beyond what happens in the passage of every day. It is however a convenient measure of time, and a customary occasion to review the past and to consider how it has left us. We may have more time granted us, but that time on which we look back is irrevocable: we may have a future, but the past is gone beyond recall. We would perhaps like to go back and alter some of the things. Here we made a decision, or took a step that carried large consequences; here we turned definitely in a certain way. We would like to do otherwise now; we are calm as we look, while then we were swayed by passion or interest. We might have gone another way: certainly it was open to us, but we can no more go that way. Whatever we may now be able to do, we cannot undo the past. The door is shut.

This is true of more than time. It is true of every sphere of life and every power of our nature. There is a period when the faculties

are in a fluid state as it were, able to run into almost any mould, but after we have been set in a particular kind of work and are bent to a particular way of life, many doors are shut that formerly were open. The man who has begun to study at thirty may become truly learned and may develop magnificently in mental power, but he knows that there are certain branches of the scholar's work that are closed to him. The time has passed when he could enter and take his place with the foremost. There are some losses that cannot be repaired, and some chances that can never be regained. The loom of life weaves out the web, and after a time there is no going back to gather up dropped stitches. The web must remain with its flaws. It does not mean that we need to have signs of age and of failing powers to convince us that for us some doors are now shut. Indeed the stronger we are in our special career, the more we realize that we have excluded ourselves from other things that once were possible in other lines.

The young man facing life has before him

many alternatives even in the matter of the kind of work he will do, but it does not take long before he realizes that the alternatives have begun to dwindle, till after some years of work he must go on with his choice, if he is to make anything of his life at all. The Unjust Steward, when the prospect of losing his situation was before him, was only stating a fact of experience when he said, "Dig I cannot; to beg I am ashamed." The more special a man's work is, the more doors have been shut against him if he would seek other work.

We find it hard to believe that we can lose *capacity*, even when we admit the possibility of losing opportunity. In youth life looks as if it were to be merely the endless opening of doors. The senses awaken and lead out to constantly new experiences, and all the faculties unfold, and opportunities come tumbling over each other as they offer themselves and press themselves. There is an embarrassment of riches as the whole world lies before the nascent life. He feels that he can go anywhere, and be anything, and do anything. "The

world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open."

In the matter of capacity the average boy with a good education can be any one of half a hundred things almost equally well. Now and again there is a boy with a single definite bent, born with a temperament which drives him irresistibly, but that is rare. The ordinary college boy stands before a great many possible openings, and his friends think it fortunate when at last he gets his alternative down to two. He will gravely say that he is not sure at present whether he will take up architecture or agriculture. Or he is hesitating between being a doctor or a minister; or he is not sure whether to go in for law or business. There is no affectation about it, as older people sometimes think. It is an exact statement of the case. In youth the whole world seems to lie open to a man, and he can choose his path. It is the charm and romance of life in youth that this is so. He does not know that it will not be thus forever, and even not for long. He does not realize, what his elders have experienced, that when one passes through a certain

door, the others begin to shut. We do not go very far before we almost hear them shutting. Door after door swings on its hinges and clangs to the portal.

Capacity, which formerly was fluid, gets set and hardens. It is at last in its groove. In acquiring facility for its special work, it loses adaptability for other kinds of works. Take the shoemaker from his last, and you may spoil a good shoemaker without getting anything of value in return. In Browning's beautiful poem to his wife, *One Word More*, the story is recalled that Raphael the great painter, Raphael of the dear Madonnas, wrote a volume of sonnets. Artists, who acquire mastery of one medium, are often ambitious of rivalling their fame in another line. It might well be that Raphael should think little of his Madonnas and would fain write great poems. But "you and I will never read that volume." And Dante, of the dread Inferno, once prepared to paint an angel, according to report. The poet suggests that he stopped his painting because certain people of importance entered when the inspiration was on him, and interrupted. "You

and I will never see that picture." Even for them, the most gifted sons of men, there are doors that are shut.

There are even sterner limitations still. There are things that bring before us in even more drastic manner our lost occasions and the irreparable past. Think of the doors that death shuts, for example. "It is the bitterest element," says Lord Morley, "in the vast irony of human life that the time-worn eyes to which a son's success would have brought the purest gladness are so often closed forever before success has come." We may however have bitterer thoughts in the presence of death than even that. We may know something of the remorse of lost opportunities, which can never come to us though we seek with tears. Death closes doors not only for the dead, but for some of the living. In Carlyle's Reminiscences of his wife Jane Welsh Carlyle there are some sad passages, where he recalls scenes of the past. One cannot read them without almost hearing the sob in the words from the old man's breast, as he brings back in memory the occasions

when his wife had been his unwearied helper, and as he longs for the chance to tell her what he felt. Many a man has known that moment, it may be when the first sod fell clattering upon the lowered coffin. Or he recalls tired eyes that are closed, and thinks of patient lips that no longer can speak their comforting word, and remembers loving hands that lie still. At such time we know too poignantly that there are some things that are irreparable. It may be that we would fain show some of the love we felt but never expressed, lavish tenderness on the dear head, or sob repentance to the gentle soul. Too late! The door is shut which no man openeth.

What is true here is true of all that we call opportunities. For all of us there are some mistakes we would gladly retrieve, and some chances we would wish to regain, and some steps to retrace. It is hard to realize that every step in our journey is really irrevocable. Men are inclined to think about some grave decision that they can at the worst go back if the venture turn not out as they hope, but it is a vain thought. They may return, but never to

the same place, and they who return are never the same. The scene has changed, and they have changed. When Goethe wrote the second part of Faust, he remarked that the man who had written Part I was dead.

A deeper shade comes over our thought of the irreparable past, when we see that it is not merely a question of having lost certain opportunities that will never come back to us, but that we have lost something of the self we might have been. It is not only that time has been squandered and opportunities missed, but also a character has been formed thus far for good or ill, and a life burdened with disabilities which past action has brought. Men do not often speak of this, but with some it represents the one acute sting of all retrospect. They sometimes think pathetically of what they might have been, and what they might have achieved. This note is often heard from men, when they open their hearts in moments of self-revelation. Even when new life opens up and new hope is found, there remains the knowledge that the old life is not given back

to be lived over, and the old opportunities are never renewed.

Repentance can bring forgiveness of sin. The past can be buried, its sorrow forgotten and its shame covered up, but even sin forgiven can never undo all the past. Many a man knows to his cost that he is weak when he might have been strong, that qualities in him are languid which should have been vigorous, that his character is poor in places where it might have been rich. There are indeed many illustrations which compel us to look with chastened heart at the tragic deprivations of life. It is against all history and against all experience to act as if any door of opportunity would never shut either for individuals or for nations. We only need to know a little of the past to have seen the doors at the appointed time crash at the threshold.

The one subject of *habit* suggests the many places where we ourselves have opened and shut doors for ourselves. In common speech we say that a certain thing has now become a second nature to us, and the phrase accurately describes the fact. By repeated action habit

builds itself into the very fibre, until it is securely entrenched in the life. It begins to work tentatively and gently, but in the end its sway is despotic. Usually we only hear of the evil side of this subject, and moralists naturally warn us that failure in life issues very largely from the contracting of bad habits. But like all other laws of life, it is *for* life, not to destroy but to conserve. It is because of habit that man is able to do so many things. He can hand over the great mass of ordinary affairs to be attended to by habit. This only shows how inexorable it is all the same. What was a tendency becomes ingrained, and after a time we are in most things walking bundles of habits. There is little wonder that moralists emphasize the importance of the habit-forming period of youth. Many of the doors, that later we find shut upon us, have been shut by our own hands.

There is no gospel in the teaching of inexorable nature and implacable consequence. To speak alone of closed doors that no man can open would be to preach fatalism. But that is the stern background from which there emerges

a possible gospel. Hope itself is born of need; for what a man hath, why doth he yet hope for? If there is no gospel in the doctrine of the shut door, it alone makes a gospel necessary. Gospel means the good news that all is not lost, that recovery is possible, that a way opens out from the bondage into a new liberty. If we must not treat the world as a place of childish magic where consequences are playthings, if we must be sure that in every act we are launching a cause which has its inevitable effect, there still remains the fact that new causes can be launched. Though the old is never obliterated, the new is always possible. There can be the new life itself, with its new meaning, and new motive, and new manner of living.

In this whole subject of the irretrievable we must be careful not to state it in terms of an unmoral fatalism, breeding a cureless despair both of the past and of the future. While there is life there is always hope. We sometimes speak of nature as if it were a machine, wound up to grind out its products till it runs down. We may not be able to say what nature is, but at least we know enough to be sure of what it

is not; and whatever nature may be, it is *not a machine.* When we discourse on the inexorableness of natural law, we seem often to be thinking of a machine, and certainly we are leaving out of account certain facts and aspects. The world is not all red with tooth and claw. There are beneficent and healing forces in nature. She covers up her scars, and even makes them beautiful. We can put nature on our side with her healthful streams. The true figure of life is not that of being held and ground in a ruthless dreadful machine. Rather it is a House of Many Mansions, where man can be at home, and yet never can come to the end of his surprises. Doors everywhere can open to him, doors into knowledge, and into beauty, and into peace, and into joy, and into fullness of life.

Our consideration of the shut doors of life, while it should not lead to despair, should surely make us serious. Better know something of sorrow and remorse, than live the shallow surface life that never thinks at all. It might be well for youth to call a halt amid the

enticements of novel experience, and lay hold of the fact that there may be one of life's blessings which, if lost, a man can never find again though he seek it diligently with tears. Men no longer young are sometimes tempted to linger too long over the backward look, and to stand by the grave of buried hopes. They think of what they might have been and done, how they might have grown in character and in gracious life. They think of what they have lost by the way. It is a mood which, rightly used, has its value, though it is not without danger. Its value lies in clearly appreciating facts and accepting them calmly. It may also drive a man to redeem the time and buy up his opportunities. Its danger is to spend itself in sentiment and self-pity, or to blind the eyes to the new doors of opportunity that are still open, in the painful thought of those that are now shut.

If we look back, it is that we may learn to look forward. The lesson of any regret or remorse in the backward look is, not that we may feel the despair of the past, but that we may feel the responsibility of the present. An ex-

clusive view of the past would drain from us all strength: that way madness lies. If we look backward to learn, we can and ought to look forward to hope. We can learn, only because we hope. We sweep out the dead autumn leaves, because the fresh buddings of spring will come and cover the earth with its sweet green mantle. The past may have its dead to bury, but while there is life there is hope. It is in no spirit of childish optimism we can still look for the open door of life's possibilities, but made solemn by the knowledge that no opportunity in all the world is offered to us forever. All the future is ours, and to look forward in any useful sense means to ask what it is going to be. The same wasted time, and lost chances, and broken endeavours of good? A life circling round an ever poorer self with narrowing opportunities, or a life that reaches out through service to ever larger ends till it passes gladly, laden with rich spoils? Our sombre look at the irreparable past and at the shut doors will have done its true work, if it make us serious, and move us to the new endeavour of the new way.

IV

The Doorways of Tradition

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

—*Tennyson.*

IV

THE DOORWAYS OF TRADITION

N some ways we treat the past with too much reverence. We sometimes give it a false authority. This is true even although, as we saw in the last two chapters, we also often underrate its importance and its enduring results. We cannot wisely face our future without knowing the past and taking it into account. The law of fitness conditions our opportunities, and the law of consequences is unfailing. These two laws justify much of the authority, which the past claims and receives from us. At the same time we let ourselves be hag-ridden by tradition, and the open door is hidden from us. The very achievements of the past have the effect of robbing the next generation of its own legitimate triumphs. We forget that the sacredest traditions which we rightly prize were once themselves only open doors, through which

men passed and took possession. By the same right we too may press towards the gateway of our own generation.

The relative place of the traditional and the original makes an interesting study in every region of life. We see the battle for precedence going on in politics, in law, in education, in industry, and perhaps most acutely of all in religion. A *political system* gathers a kind of sacredness from the fact that generations were born into it and brought up under it. It may have outlived its usefulness, and may be a most cumbrous machine that only works with creaks and jolts, but we will patch it up and tinker it endlessly, rather than send it to the scrap-heap. It is only in times of revolution that such summary treatment is meted out to it. Even after the spasm we find men laboriously picking out pieces from the pile to work into the new machine.

A *legal code* gathers authority from the mere fact that it is called law. It may be absurd, it may be unjust, with enactments that none would attempt to justify by reason, yet in too will be kept going, till it falls through of its

own weight. The proverbial law's delays are often due to the conscientious working of a crazy machine. Charles Dickens in "Bleak House" scarified the absurdities and corruptions of the old English Court of Chancery, yet that court began as an attempt to correct strict law by equity. Dickens' satire of the state of law of his time, while exaggerated, was essentially true. His hero in "David Copperfield" when looking out for a profession was advised to be a proctor. On asking what that was, his friend replied, "He is a functionary whose existence in the natural course of things would have terminated about two hundred years ago. I can tell you best what he is by telling you what Doctors' Commons is. It's a little out-of-the-way place, where they administer what is called ecclesiastical law, and play all kinds of tricks with obsolete old monsters of Acts of Parliament, which three-fourths of the world know nothing about, and the other fourth supposes to have been dug up, in a fossil state, in the days of the Edwards. It is a place that has an ancient monopoly in suits about people's wills and people's marriages, and disputes among

ships and boats. . . . It is a very pleasant, profitable little affair of private theatricals."

Space would fail if we attempted to recount the absurdities that for generations held their place in *education*. We can recognize and appraise some of the more ancient absurdities, both in the subjects taught, and in the manner of teaching them. We see them to have been relics of past ages, when they had some appropriateness and meaning—grammar taught in a fog of weird forms and barbarous terms, Latin versification to boys who knew nothing of what even English poetry was. The subjects and the methods had gathered sacredness through mere antiquity, and were kept going through use and wont. It is still hard for some of us who were trained in the old school to rid our minds of the idea that there can be only one true system of education. We go on doing things for no other reason than that they have been done, and we assume that there can be no other right method of doing them. The incubus of tradition lies heavy on us, and we lay the hard burden upon the tender backs of the next generation.

Our present *social order* and industrial system have also "acquired merit" in the selfsame way. They have grown, and we have grown accustomed to them, so that even when we ourselves can riddle them with criticism we think them inevitable. We dislike the thought of change from our static conditions. We feel that anything else would be unworkable, and are afraid to touch the whole social fabric in case it comes down about our ears. Economic principles like supply and demand, and the divine right of competition, are intoned in our ears like items of a sacred creed. Some even resent criticism, and speak as if sacrilegious hands were laid on the carved work of the sanctuary itself. Property is spoken of as if it had some inalienable rights, instead of being the product of society which society can alter if it desires.

In every *art* there grows a system of prescribed rules, a sacred way of doing things. Established schools arise according to definite canons laid down once for all. The ideal becomes clever variations of recognized standards —vain repetitions as the heathen do! Even

science achieves some formulas which acquire a certain sacredness. The chief enemies of any advance often come from these, who work in the same sphere, and who like to think that they have reached absolute authority. Heretics are not confined to ecclesiastical circles. Doctors are sometimes the bitterest opponents of new methods in medicine. Men who have themselves become authorities in a science shake their heads gravely over the vagaries of newer schools. Science fortunately for itself does not suffer so much, since it cannot suffer so long, because of its frankly experimental basis. It may be disconcerting to have settled views of the constitution of matter upset by radioactivity, but radium and its properties can be seen and somehow must be taken into account.

It is not to be wondered that in *religion* the same process should be seen intensified, for it deals with the most intimate region of life and with the profoundest experiences. The very reverence which the soul has for ancient truth, fragrant with sacred memories and holy associations, makes it easy to give it authority. No

institutions among men last so long without shadow of change as those that have to do with religion. There are more functionaries than Dickens' proctor, whose existence in the natural course of things should have terminated two hundred years ago; and there are some other institutions that go on as profitable little affairs of private theatricals. More readily here than anywhere else in life do we fall back on authority, of church, or creed, or book. Tradition carries more weight here than elsewhere, and fights its battle more stubbornly. In what follows we naturally take many of our illustrations from this sphere because tradition is more deeply intrenched here. It is not that any different quality of human nature is displayed, but merely the same natural characteristic as is seen elsewhere. We sometimes speak of the ecclesiastical mind, as if it were a different order of human being. But it is only man showing there the same temper as we find in other spheres, only in an exaggerated form.

Is there a justification for this wide-spread tendency? Is there a true instinct lying back

of this tenderness with past institutions? There must be, since we find it so universal. Of course temperament and training do much to influence us as to the amount of authority we give to tradition. Great masses of men and whole churches practically rest on it, and those who think themselves free of it often find the same refuge under disguise. Custom and tradition play their immense part with only a difference of name. The restlessness of Protestantism, with its ferment of new opinions and theories, may seem to be well contrasted with the settled trust in tradition. As a matter of fact, however, though there is more freedom, we often find in Protestantism only a transference of authority from the Church to the Bible. Historically the tyranny of tradition is seen becoming so great that there is a swing of the pendulum to the other extreme. To-day in some quarters there is seen impatience of authority, and an exaggeration of the rights of the individual, and an assertion of the exclusive claim of personal experience.

There is a true tradition and a right weight to be given to the past. In every region of

knowledge and in every branch of activity wise men recognize that through the ages there accumulates experience, and that customs and thoughts and methods as well as material are transmitted. In religion as elsewhere it is folly to cut ourselves from the life of the past, and to refuse to enter into our inheritance. We cannot do this without loss in any sphere of life, in law and morals and science and art, and to do it in religion always spells failure. This great fact explains the mass and weight of the whole Roman Catholic position and its attraction to many minds, and the lack of it explains why so often Protestantism has broken up into sections and diffused itself vainly. The true attitude does not despise tradition. It only sifts it, and tests it, and seeks to separate false elements from the true. To have a right attitude towards tradition in religion settles for us many questions. It makes an epoch in a man's life, when he goes to the root of the whole matter of religious evidence, and raises the question of what is original and what is merely traditional, what is personal and what is derivative, what he owes to custom or

unthinking usage and what he arrives at independently or at least what he has made his own.

When we speak of *originality* we do not mean starting afresh, but making vital tradition our own. Not that personal experience is independent of all authority, but that it is to the soul the supreme evidence, the corroboration and attestation of the truth by which it lives. This is the difference of appeal a religious message makes. To some it is hearsay, something that can be classed with rumour, oral or written words, and therefore something outside of life, and it does not make much difference whether they believe it or not. To others it is something spoken to heart and conscience, and it is as if it were written within, till it seems as though it were graved indelibly on the soul, something with which they are in vital connection. They have thrilled to it, made it their own, and respond in newness of life.

Of course in a sense we owe everything to others. What have we that we have not received? The chief education of life consists

in learning what has been said, and felt, and thought, and done by others. We enter into the inheritance of the past with all its gathered riches. All knowledge is a growth, and if the fruit is now it is because the roots are back in the sub-soil of history. We are dressed in garments that come to us ready-to-wear, made by other hands. Art, science, literature, religion, all the precious essence of the human spirit, is exuded drop by drop through the toil and tears of many generations. If we know anything, it is because others told it us. In every sphere of human life, practical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, other men laboured and we have entered into their labours. Education in any branch of learning must begin with simple reception of information. The child is not asked to prove the multiplication table, but to *learn* it. Some of the trouble of our education is that he is not always made to learn it. External authority is the first method of education. The child is naturally imitative, and the process of learning is a form of mimicry. He says and believes things not of himself, but because others tell them to him.

This is true of religion, as well as of other spheres of knowledge. Some religious beliefs may be primitive and instinctive, but if we were confined to that source we can imagine how fragmentary and mistaken they would be. We are in a great succession, and our inner life is shaped and coloured for us. We are born into a spiritual climate as well as a physical one, and the effects of the first are even more far-reaching than the latter. We cannot renounce authority altogether, even if we would like to do it. And authority ought to have great weight with us always. It is foolish to run amuck against all custom and immemorial usage and tradition, as if the world could begin all over again with us. It is absurd to suppose that past history can go for nothing in religion, any more that it can in the life of a nation. External authority plays an important part in our early religious education, as it plays an important part in all other education. We believe first of all because we have heard.

So far as it goes, that is satisfactory ground. Tradition is not the seat of authority in religion, but it is foolish to exclude it without ade-

quate examination. A wide and long-continued faith is at least presumptive evidence, that there is something in it to be examined with reverence and care. To deny any authority to tradition in religion would be logically to cut away the feet from any form of knowledge, and to condemn any kind of education whatever. The Church must ever begin her argument, as the Psalmist began his plea, by the statement, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old." It is not enough for a stable and permanent faith, but it at least is something to begin with. Tradition can never take the place of experience; but without tradition experience would lack much of its weight.

Absolute originality is impossible in anything. What we usually mean by originality in the great creative works of genius in literature and art is simply *individuality*, that the artist has taken from the common stock, but given it a new setting, passed the truth through his own mind and heart, brought out new beauties and fresh aspects. We call Shakespeare the

most original of English authors. Yet Shakespeare got his blank verse from Marlowe, his plots from wherever he could find them, and even sometimes lifted a whole play bodily. But he made them "suffer a sea-change into something passing rich and strange," so that they are his absolutely. If any poet was original it was Robert Burns, singing with native grace. Yet many of his best songs were the songs of the country, crooned by the old women over the fire, and whistled by the ploughboys in the field. But he passed them through the alembic of his own nature, so that they came out coloured by the blood of his own hot heart, and they are his alone. Without this individuality work is drudgery, and art is sterile, and worship is convention. The highest originality is always related to the old and the past. Truth does not begin with us any more than it will die with us. In a very real sense we can say nothing that is entirely of ourself; and if we do say anything of value, it is because others have told it us. The student of history or science or art cannot ignore the past, though unimpeachable certainty may be his

chief purpose. A man of science, who tried to perform all the experiments that brought his subject up to its present stage, would need to look forward to a long life. There is nothing more offensive in religion than contempt of the past in doctrine, in faith, in life.

Because of this, the prevalent temptation is undoubtedly a temptation to lay too much emphasis on tradition and external authority, and to leave no scope for new vistas of truth to be opened up. The conventional has a firm hold on us, because religion is not a living energizing power with us. One note of Christ's work is the stress He laid on the single life. He taught and enforced the originality of the separate soul. We need only think of the value He put on the individual to show this. He singled each man out from the mass, and made him stand, a life apart. And the result of the Gospel is always to define the personality with clear lines, each with separate character, peculiar gifts, special opportunity, particular work and service. Each has a contribution to make distinct from everybody else. This un-

doubtedly follows from the teaching of Jesus, and we see this emerging in actual life in the early Church. The spirit of every man in direct contact with the spirit of God is the New Testament conception of religion.

Now all this is opposed to the spirit and practice of the world, the natural *inertia* of the ordinary state of things. Society works incessantly at eradicating spiritual originality. It keeps reducing men to the level of things—a dead level—cutting all to pattern, rubbing off corners. We know how society looks askance at the original and the eccentric, and has hard names of crank and fanatic for all who run counter to social custom and prejudice. One must not speak strongly, or think freely, or act individually. There is of course good in this; for it pulls up, as well as rubs down, and it is a useful deterrent to parade of singularity. The genius of society aims at collective action, and moulds all to one type of life. The sway of custom is strong in everything, and mere protest against custom may be only conceit or antisocial feeling. Still, it is this conventionality which makes for medioc-

rity, and for the prosaic in every line of life. Genius is always more or less of an affront, either not recognized or hated or feared.

In politics we have the fetish of public opinion, as if what the man in the street thinks must be good policy, and the opportunist statesman swings tremulously to catch the popular breeze. He has no burning convictions, no immovable principles. In art also the world wants only clever adaptations and repetitions, the reproduction of past triumphs. In religion especially this temptation abounds. We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, and we accept unthinkingly the past record. How much of our faith is taken by us on trust, a matter of hearsay? Men repeat catch phrases, which have gathered a certain sacredness from antiquity. How seldom we hear a real live original voice, that is not merely an echo of some one else! In spite of what we have admitted as to the place of authority in education, the true education after all is tested by what we say and do and think of ourselves, and not because others have told us. Though it is not given to every one to be a pioneer of

truth, yet truth is little to us until we have absorbed it and made it our own, so much our own that it has practically ceased to be derivative and becomes personal. In religion tradition must have become experience before anything is achieved. We must walk by faith and not by custom: we must live by insight and not by prescription.

Originality of a certain kind is always welcome. The Athenian temper is more or less common, a desire to hear and tell some new thing, and many more than the old king would be willing to offer a reward for the discovery of a new pleasure. Originality of execution in literature and art and work generally is always sure of recognition. But originality of thought has a stiff up-hill battle to fight. Originality, which asks for a new standpoint, which seeks to change current views, which attempts to alter custom and influence life, has usually to learn the meaning of neglect and opposition. In different forms and ways men have been saying through all the centuries that a prophet cannot come out of Nazareth, that no good can

come from Galilee, that a majority is always in the right, that safety is got by the traditions of the fathers, and truth from the wisdom of the ancients, that the law shall not perish from the priest, nor council from the wise, nor the word from the prophet—and all along the centuries this complacent creed has been continually falsified. It is from the unthought-of quarter that the light comes. It is the unexpected that happens. From following the herd is a prophet chosen, or from the steps of the throne, or from the priesthood itself.

In other planes than the religious something of the same truth is noticed. You can educate talent; you cannot generate genius. In the most unlikely places, from the strangest quarter, the man is born with a quality of soul apart. In every region of thought the period of decadence has set in when men declare that there is no further advance possible. The artist can only repeat the past. There can be nothing new in art, men have often said—till the new appears, the thing that was impossible happens. How simple is the new; the stumbling block is always the simplicity. Pretenders strive after

outre effects making up for the want of real originality by a false sensationalism. All possibility in orchestration has been already exhausted, say musical critics. And pretenders seek to demonstrate genius by *bizarre* combinations, by making strange and weird noises—till the master of song again arises, and music spontaneous as the note of a bird is once more heard in the land. There may be nothing new in the methods and materials, the old colours on the canvas, the old instruments, the painter's pencil and the sculptor's chisel, are the same as of old. It is the spirit that is new.

In the highest sphere of all a man comes from God with the divine afflatus, with clear spiritual susceptibility, with a genius for religion, with an unerring instinct for morality as a great artist has an instinct for beauty. We the faithless ones, with our comfortable creed which desires no change and therefore asserts there can be no change, rejoice in our darkness and call it light. It is as possible for us as for the Pharisees to make the higher law void by our traditions, by closing our eyes to the light which leads us to new ethical re-

sponsibilities, by refusing to believe that there is an open door for our generation. The danger of tradition becomes greater from the very lapse of time. The Gospel which came as new life becomes like an oft-told tale, the revelations that transfigure the world to early believers do not seem so wonderful and fresh to us. They do not grip us with the same intensity, and drive us with the same impulse. Routine takes the place of inspiration. We trust to the usual and the conventional, to tradition rather than to experience, and life loses the uplift of a commanding passion. What was a new creation seems commonplace and trite. We stand at the doorways of tradition, blind to the open door of our own new day.

V

The Magic Door

Enflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue ; stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages.

—*Milton.*

V

THE MAGIC DOOR

OUTH stands at the magic door of life, over which mystery broods. It never remains the same, but seems to alter with every different applicant. This is not strange, since youth itself does not stay the same. We speak of youth as if it were always of one texture and colour, whereas it is the time of chaotic contradictions. We talk of the hopefulness of youth, which is true enough, and yet some have known then a bitter despair never again equalled. We call it a time of impractical radicalism, and yet it is curiously conservative. We speak of its blithe carelessness, and yet it is sometimes marked by moods of brooding sadness. It is like an April day flecked with alternate sun and shower. Whatever youth does, it does with zest, believes more valiantly, doubts more tragically,

hopes more buoyantly, fears more poignantly than ever again.

All this because it is the time of dawning self-expression. It is for the first time fully conscious of being alive, and has eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Youth stands before ways that entice in every direction. It has the key to the magic door. It has a thirst for experience, and everything depends on how it seeks to slake that thirst. Some get drawn off by the urgency of passion, and are turned away from the true path of life, allured by the fickle lights of pleasure. The sacred flame burns itself out into dead ashes. To those who escape that fate we turn for the world's hope; for the inner heat of their nature gets outlet in the enthusiasms and ideals that save us from stagnation. They come with their fresh keen insight, and compel us to review our mouldy formulas and tarnished standards. They force us out from our timid and sleek securities into untrodden ways.

The phrase is sometimes used of some one

who is still young in years that he is taking the *old man's view of things.* It is said not in praise, but in blame. There is always a tone of reproach or regret in the accusation. We mean by it that his mind has become static, that he is no longer open to new ideas, and that he has ceased to grow. It is not all commendation when we say that such a one has an old head on young shoulders, even when we know that he has achieved some of the safety that comes from prudence. We feel that he is prematurely old, and with all our congratulation for the appearance of wisdom there is a sense of regret as at something untimely, like the unexpected death of a child. He has ripened too soon, and the freshness and promise have departed. Youth ought not to be prudent; for prudence before its time can be the meanest of the virtues. Each age has its natural virtues and its common vices. Moralists tell us that covetousness is the vice of age. It is never a pleasant quality, but in youth it is hideous. Better spendthrift youth, careless of the future, gaily venturing without undue forethought, than always calculating advantages

and always considering the main chance. The old man's attitude may not mean any such moral obliquity, and may only mean the loss of intellectual curiosity and of interest in life.

Doctors say that old age physically comes with the hardening of the arteries, which is not in itself a matter of mere time. A man may be reasonably young at sixty, and growing old at thirty. Intellectually, old age comes with the hardening of the brain passages. Ideas are crystallized and life has become static. The mind cannot adjust itself to a new point of view. New evidence has no effect on settled positions, and the man is even impatient at being asked to reconsider questions. The amazing procession of life can pass before lustreless eyes, and make no vivid impression. There is a loss of interest, and experience in any real sense has ceased. There is no vital response to any new appeal. It is like knocking at the door of an unoccupied house. Once more this is not a matter of mere time; for some men old in years have kept their attitude of curiosity alert and their interest fresh. They have never quite forgotten their first

entrance through the magic door. The world looks as big as ever, and life seems as significant. We do not find such among those who think it a sufficient answer to say to eager youth that it is young; for they know how much the world owes to the youthful temper.

Youth feeds the world with life, not merely that it assures physical continuity to the race, but also that it keeps alive all spiritual adventure. Older people sometimes assume a patronizing air towards youth, as if they looked down from a serene height with pity for its inexperience. If all the truth were known, there is more envy than pity in the attitude. They know that now they are not capable of the high enthusiasm, and generous ardour, and noble passion, which they affect to depreciate. All the time it is by these things that we really live; for youth puts the yeast into the whole lump of life that saves it from decay. Even the older men who keep alert do so far more than they imagine by tapping the brains, and using the strength of the younger generation. We prey upon our children, and suck the blood of our offspring. Life so soon

becomes stereotyped and hardens into settled grooves, and only youth has the courage to break the moulds.

The elder among us like to speak of the value of *experience*, and of course it has a great value, but not as we often mean by it. It is nothing in itself to have come through a great many things. We look on experience as capital, which can be put out to interest and earn us a living without any further effort. Capital so treated often takes wings and flies away, and the capitalist wakes up to find his resources gone. Experience so treated ceases to have any value. It has become conventional and stereotyped, and does not apply to the new conditions. This is one reason why youth is often impatient at the pratings about experience. It seems to have no earthly relation to the particular situation with which we are faced. It is antiquated knowledge, and has not been brought up to date.

What is experience, on which age puts such mystical value? We think of it as something definite like money in our pocket. It is really

the interpretation of life, and to be true and of any value must change as life itself keeps changing. Coleridge somewhere likens experience to the stern light of a ship at sea, which illumines the track that has been passed over, but does nothing to lighten the course to be traversed. It is a fit description of much that passes for experience. There ought to be a residuum of wisdom left, a training in judgment and character able to be applied to other and new occasions. When this is the case it is a valuable contribution. Age as a rule does not really *have* experience, though it may once have had it. It is youth which has experience, as it actually tries out its new opportunities, and meets its new situations, and grapples with its new problems, and is hand to hand with life. Knowledge of the ancient doorways of tradition is not all that is needed; for youth is led to ways that look like the old and yet somehow have changed.

Youth therefore ought to be adventurous, since the life that lies before us is all an adventure. It has never been lived before, and none can ever forecast it. The world never can go

back over the way by which it has come, and has not passed this way heretofore. It moves to untried paths, and above all its needs it stands in need of path-finders. The glorious idealism of youth is its greatest asset. Youth ought to be radical, asking its insistent questions, even pouring its contempt on our smug ways and respectable institutions. We sometimes blame young men for being opinionative, and self-willed, and too fond of airing their own notions of things, and too individual in their attitude. As a matter of fact they are too easily brow-beaten into compliance with the conventional, too soon licked into the usual shape, too afraid of being themselves. The world is full of conformists, thinking, saying, acting the usual. The poet that was in all of us dies too young. We need more non-conformists, more men ready to protest, because their eyes have seen a nobler vision. It would be a poor thing to have youth prudent with the selfish calculating prudence of worldly wisdom. Life stretches out at the feet of youth to be made what it will. It can be as rich and beautiful as youth likes to have it.

This is the Magic Door, that ushers to the very land of dreams. We have seen that the world is not any one thing but is as big as we are able to use, and life can be anything we have the faith and courage and knowledge to make it. The place of a man in the spiritual kingdom is settled not by his graces, nor by his attainments, nor even by his actions in themselves, but by his will. Ultimately what a man wills to do, he does, and what he desires he receives. What he bends his heart to reach comes sooner or later to his hand. It is truly a magic door, if we get at it what we demand. This is our serious statement, that what we request is given to us, and what we really will in our hearts we attain. Life comes and says calmly and confidently, "Ask what I shall give you," and the door opens out into the place of our asking.

This may seem at first an absurd statement that what a man seeks he finds, and where he knocks it is opened to him, but if we think a little we will see that it is true. We may not get the exact thing we most desire. The particular object on which we have set our hearts may be to the end out of our reach, but

we get *along the line of our desire.* The farmer who sows wheat may not get as much wheat at the harvest as he would like (what farmer ever does get as much as that?)—but he will get nothing else than wheat. He never expects to get oats, where he sowed wheat. If a man has set his heart on the world he may not get as many of the things of the world as will satisfy him (what man ever does get that?)—but he will get nothing else than the things of the world. If he is bent on the satisfaction of the earthly appetites and desires, he will get that to some extent, though afterwards he may discover that his request has brought with it leanness of soul, and an empty life. But he will get nothing else. Let us be reasonable, how can we expect anything else? To choose the world as our portion is to get it,—at least it is to limit our resources to purely worldly ones. To choose the higher life of the things of the mind and of the soul as our portion is to get them, to open up our heart to intellectual and spiritual joys. There is no promise also of the things which the worldly man enjoys. That was not our request.

The point of distinction is the quality of the request, the kind of satisfaction the soul puts before it. It does not mean that the worldly man will be successful in all his earthly ventures, and will be satiated in every fleshly desire. Merely, that if he is not satisfied there he can be satisfied nowhere; for nowhere else has he sowed for a harvest. It does not mean that the spiritual man will have every prayer even for spiritual blessing answered exactly as he asks, but that where he has put his heart he will find his life. If his aim is to attain to his own ideal, if he seeks growth in gracious life, in noble character, in generous service, all that is the kind of harvest he will reap. One special prayer may not be answered, for the very reason that it would not be along the line of his usual desire. If he is bent on character, he will enrich and sweeten character. If he is bent on communion, he will have his soul lifted up to the very presence of God some time. The saint's trial is that the means often seems so unlike the end he seeks and prays for. But let him be sure that the law holds good.

There is nothing magical on either side. We call it a Magic Door, because there is no magic in the world. It is one of the unchastened dreams of the human heart to possess some talisman to gratify every desire as it arises, a magic carpet of the Arabian Nights' Entertainment to transport us anywhere at will, a magic lamp which at a rub will evoke unseen powers to do our bidding, a magic word to open the world's treasure-trove. That is an idle and somewhat childish dream, but it is true nevertheless that we already possess as much power over our lives. What we lust after, what we give up our heart to, what we really request from life, what we desire as our chief good and foster in our thoughts as the imperious need of our hearts, that we cannot but get. When we make our deliberate, conscious, persistent choice, we are launching a cause that cannot fail of its effect.

This is the birth of sin, not in the act, but in the *desire*. It is here is its guilt, as it is here is the possibility of escape from it. An evil will only needs opportunity to blossom out into the full-blown crime, or vice, or cruelty, or shame. The sin is in the selfishness which lusted

exceedingly. It only lacks an opportunity; and the opportunity cannot be kept from us forever. In a sense the evil is already done, when the heart is given up to it. Like strong-headed oxen we pull at the yoke, pull and at last get clear—to our own undoing. Sooner or later we have our way. We persist, we seek it, we will have it. It is as if life said to us to take it—the sin and the curse, the desire and the sting.

Not vindictively, not as a punishment, not in revenge, a petulant revenge for the willfulness that cannot be curbed. No, but because that is the inevitable consequence; that is of the very nature of the case. Our hope lies in this. That leanness of soul may send us, who have had this terrible success, through very loathing to change the current of our desires, to set our affections not on the selfish worldly ambitions, but on the higher things. The wasting sickness may turn our hearts from the broken cisterns that hold no water, to the true water of life, and hereafter we may live with whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. For there is a place of

escape. The point of departure for each of us is in the will.

The great question then comes to be that we should ask ourselves what our will is. If our heart were unveiled, what would be seen there at the bottom as the foundation of our scheme of life? The question is not whether we have passed a blameless life, and can stand in conscious rectitude, not whether we have faltered and fallen by the way and have come short of our own ideal. The question has to do with the bent, and bias, and *direction* of our life. Have we chosen the better part, the part our own heart tells us to be best? If so, we may be sure that we will get what we have chosen, and more, a richer apprehension and a fuller possession of goodness and beauty and truth. Or, has our ideal of life been a purely selfish one, of pleasure or ambition or low desire? Has our best vision gone out of our life these last years since the world took such hold on us, as the sunshine creeps out of the valley? What is our will in this great matter of life? Can it be defined in the scathing pitiless condemnation as only some variant of the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? In this great rich wonderful world of God,

> Where all men's prayers to Thee raised
> Return possessed of what they pray Thee,

on this earth made beautiful with the beauty of holiness, the scene of love and redemption, the place of noble life and sometimes nobler death, have we only asked for the poor and the petty, and have been paid the price of our prayer—a small, shrunk, lean, and loathly soul? What have we been asking—*and getting*—in our ceaseless prayer for life?

The world responds to asking, though not to wishing. It is a rich world that knows no respect of persons, but gives us each what we most desire. True we may never get as much as we desire, but only along the line of our desire can we get at all. Nothing of value is ever got without its price, but if we are willing to pay the price it can be had, and the price is that we should ask. The Arabian Nights' conception of the world is a far poorer thought of it than the reality. We learn that the universe

has a moral and causal base, and that the asking to which it responds is far other than idle wishing. To ask for a thing in this cosmic sense means to bend heart and mind to it, to foster it as the imperious need of life, to be ready to sacrifice all else for it. What a man seeks in such fashion he cannot fail to find. We can rely on the law of cause and effect. If a man applies himself exclusively to money-making, one hopes that he will make a lot; for it is certain that he will make nothing else. The material success may not be very conspicuous, but the making of the man will be according to his ideal.

In our usual calculations we count on the working of this principle. The world has eternal justice at its heart, and we reap the measure of our sowing. William James sums up one of the chapters of his Text-book of Psychology with this encouraging statement, "Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty

count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the details of his business, the power of judging in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together."

We are paid in the current coin of our own ideal. If we know what we want from the world and have made up our mind as to the chief end of life, the door opens to us. This is why our ideal is of more importance than even our present real. The one has the shaping of the other. The hope of the world lies with those we call visionaries, who kick at our treasured customs and ideas and inspirations, who plan their spacious schemes of reform, who dream dreams and see visions. It lies with the very men who have to suffer from our ancient gibes about enthusiasm and youthful ignorance.

Without them everything tends to degradation, in politics and business and art and religion and social life. They have insight because they have outlook. We pass our inane judgments about Utopia and Castles in Spain, when idealism is really the life of all that lives in man. There might be some sense in asking youth to give up its ideals, if we could point to a state of affairs that was less of a stupid muddle than our present condition. Rather we might well welcome the youthful enthusiasm, which hopes and dares, and which above all sees. Even with our purblind eyes we recognize the tragedy when youth sells its birthright for a mess of pottage. The tacit assumption which we so easily make, that long established wrong must remain, is responsible for much of the world's misery. We refuse to believe that we can make of human life and human society what it is in our heart to make it. Nothing can be done until we get our vision right and cherish the true ideal.

The real value of a life is its central faith, not as propositions of a creed but the affirma-

tion it makes to the world. Our faith is our general spiritual attitude, and a life can only be justified by faith. Our true worth must be found in this region, not in those vulgar standards by which we commonly judge success. Usually we have no time and little inclination to consider anything but the logic of facts, and so our judgments are rough and ready, confined mostly to the surface of men and things. We are tempted to take men at their own valuation, and even when we do not, as often as not we lay the stress on the wrong quality. If we escape the more sordid estimates of wealth or position, we may substitute as untrustworthy measurements such as talents or even the work done.

It is certainly getting nearer the mark to place men according to their achievements; for though a man does not merit credit for his gifts he does for his use of them. Were the talents put out to the best usury, or were they hid in the earth? Were the gifts of fortune and person used for the highest purposes, or were they neglected, or squandered on self? The answer to this question will reveal much.

Industry, perseverance, plodding patience, are looked down on as inferior qualities. Our pinchbeck geniuses sneer at them as of lower standing, but after all they are the only qualities for which a man has the smallest ground of pride. The man, who can point to his tale of bricks skillfully and honestly made, has something to go upon. Work done must always receive its meed of praise. Even in religion good works represent the great object which must ever be kept in view. And as it is the end so is it the ultimate test, "By their fruits ye shall know them." A candidate for ordination, when asked for the doctrine of the Anglican church on good works, replied with commendable caution, "A few of them would not do a man any harm."

At the same time the standard of work is a very outside one to apply to such a subtle and complex thing as life. After all, the quality of perseverance is itself to some extent a gift of temperament. It may also be the result of a very poor ambition, due to the sordid desire to get on in the world. By their fruits men are known, but what are their fruits? Not

surely only those things which we can see, and touch, and speak about. The true test of life is not outward—possessions, or gifts of brain, or work, or results of any kind. In the region of morals, motive counts for more than act. True works must in the end spring from true motive, because of course a man whose motives are always right cannot be always wrong in his actions. Good fruit will come from the good tree, but we are often indifferent judges of what constitutes good fruit. It is not always what is fair to the eye and pleasant to the taste.

A life is judged by its ideal, not by what we think its real. A man is judged by what he aims at, rather than by what he achieves. A life is judged by its intention, its bent, its bias, its spirit. Not what are our works—for these we are well paid otherwise, they do not fail of their market value—but what is our faith? Not what we have done, but in what spirit have we done it? Not what we have attained, but what have we attempted? Not what we grasp but what we have reached out to, the quest not the conquest, the attempt not

the attainment, the vision not the possession, the dream not the fulfillment.

> All instincts immature
> All purposes unsure
> Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;
> All I could never be,
> All men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

The idealism of youth justifies itself by its results, and it is also in line with the truest philosophy of life. It is the creative spirit of man, which fashions the world and turns it into a habitable home, compelling blind forces to go our way and yield to our ends. Idealism holds the key to the Magic Door.

VI

The Lure of the Open Door

The meagre, stale, forbidden ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance.

—*Wordsworth.*

VI

THE LURE OF THE OPEN DOOR

HERE is an elusive quality in life, which tempts us on to essay some new venture. If it were not for this, we would rarely have courage to let go accustomed moorings. The innate conservatism of human nature and the natural inertia of society hold us fast to the usual. It needs a strong pull to drag us from the known to face the unknown. Some of that pull comes from the lure of the Open Door. Even our constant desire to be safe and sane cannot always resist the happy temptation to try our fortune through the glimmering portals that invite us. But for this the innovation would have less chance than even it has, though the chance sometimes seems slim enough as it is. Commonly we want to be let alone, and it is part of our stock of wisdom to let well, and for that part ill, alone. On the whole we comfort our-

selves with our proverbs that it is wise to let sleeping dogs lie. Our early interest and curiosity about the world soon gets dulled, and the spirit of investigation gets blunted. The general tendency is ever towards the static, if not towards the stagnant. But for this other opposing force we would seldom have the courage to shake off apathy and cut loose from custom. Without it we might never venture, and would never win.

Our attempts towards progress and our welcome of the new, half-hearted enough as they often are, do not give much cause for self-elation. They are not all due to any virtue in us, but are also sometimes from necessity. The world has a way of driving us, when we will not be led. The nest gets rudely shaken, and we are thrown out to find new shelter. The sleek and smooth life dreams only of green pastures and quiet waters, and would find no place for any dark valley of shadow, but events will not allow us secure possession of peace. When change is forced on us, we sigh for rest and protest against the whirling universe. We find that we have no real security of tenure

and are open to the shock of storm and to the stress of change. Life is kinder to us than we would be ourselves; for the high things of man's nature have been forced on him.

The sense of pilgrimage which man has ever had was brought to him perforce, and the deeper meaning of it was given through necessity. It is part of the world's great debt to the Jews that their history compelled the spiritual ideal which is now our possession. The homeless, landless race, that in spite of exile had ever the dream of home in their hearts, had learned the bitterness of being uprooted and transplanted. The people of all known to history most devoted to one spot of earth, refusing to call any other place home, most stubborn in their geographical patriotism, seemed to be the very people chosen by fate to be most scattered over the face of the earth. It is the satire of history, if there were not more than satire in it. Through the homelessness, the deeper truth of a larger home for the heart of man was taught. It was to choice spirits among these alien exiled Jews living as strangers, scattered throughout the world, came the

assurance of a country of the soul, a native land of the spirit, safe from intruder and oppressor. A later writer of their race points the contrast between their dispersed and homeless state, and the possible inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.

It is a common enough thing to speak of life as a pilgrimage. The shortness of life, its changes, its fatalities, have ever impressed and oppressed the heart of man. This at least is forced in on the mind of all men who think, that here we have no abiding city. Life is but a pilgrimage, as of a wayfaring man, a stranger in a strange land passing through—out of the deep into the deep. "I depart from life," said Cicero in *De Senectute*, "as from an inn, not as from a house; for nature has given us a lodging wherein to tarry but not to dwell." It is not a house but an inn, not a home but a hotel, not an abiding place but a lodging place of wayfaring men. This figure of the world as an inn expresses the thought of pilgrimage, and it is a figure not unknown to literature, as in Omar Khayyam:

Think in this battered caravanserai,
Whose portals are alternate night and day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp
Abode his destin'd hour, and went his way.

It was burnt into Israel by their history. The sense of pilgrimage was in the life of all their great and good men of old through sheer necessity. Abraham went out from home and kindred not knowing whither he went, and all his life he was merely the heir of a promise. He sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles; for he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Isaac and Jacob lived and died heirs with him of the same promise. They all died in faith, without fulfillment, not having received the promises, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth—ever seeking a country, never finding it, but seeing it only afar off. Moses was a stranger in the land of Midian, not allowed to have roots even in Egypt, foreign country as it was. The race was homeless for generations. The Promised Land was held before their eyes as a dream and when at last

it was attained it was only to find that in a deeper and more spiritual sense the Promised Land lay still in front. They were never allowed to forget that they had been strangers in the land of Egypt. The lees were ever shaken. The nest was ever stirred and scattered, and the fledglings thrown out. Could they forget that they had only a house of pilgrimage? On the threshing-floor of Assyria and Babylon they were threshed and thrown up against a high wind and scattered. Children of the Dispersion they have been ever since.

It is the lesson of the elusiveness of life, a parable in action of the world. Their experience became the heritage of man as a spiritual being, and the heart responds to the appeal of pilgrimage that the present is not our home, only an inn, a battered Caravanserai, a lodging place of wayfaring men: if we are not to be homeless forever, we must desire a better country, look for a city that hath foundations. Idealism which keeps the soul alive in us attests the innate faith of man in his destiny.

The lure of the Open Door is part of the lure of the future. A future of some kind is needed for life; for we are not only saved, we are kept living by hope. For all real purposes life has ceased when there has ceased to be a future. To have no future, no to-morrow, is to empty life of what makes it life. Existence may go on, but living has ended. When the future means merely the passage of time, days and nights, it is death already. "Abandon hope" is the motto over the entrance to the Inferno, not over the entrance to any human habitation. For the great purpose of the Exile to which we have referred it was necessary that the exiles should be sure that they had a future and a hope. Otherwise they would have dwindled away among the heathen and ceased to be a distinctive people, giving up faith altogether; and the great education of Israel would have been lost to the world. For the weary years to come, as generation passed away after generation, hope had to spring eternal in the heart of the nation; they had to keep believing and to keep expecting, or the fate of the lost tribes would be theirs, and the last chance for

Israel would be gone. The spiritual life of the Old Testament could not have gone on without a future and a hope.

No life to be called life can go on without it.

> To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death.

When that is the tone and temper of life it is nearing its end. Both for the individual and for the race, hope is the inspiring force. It may be illusion, the fraudulent scheme of nature to achieve her own purposes, but at any rate it is there, a light to lead men on. From the first early days when the youth blows bubbles out of soap and water and sees wonderful visions in them, the future entices and allures. The young man has a future, and if no longer the child's dream of pleasures and palaces, a future of power and influence. He will achieve something, get something, do something, be something. When he loses his dream he loses his youth.

A future is necessary to a man in every

branch of activity. It is necessary not only for success, but also for a reasonable existence in that particular sphere. The business man has a future: he has his legitimate business ambitions and hopes. The true scholar has a future, in which greater knowledge will be gathered, problems be solved and the world be bettered by his knowledge: it is when he loses sight of the future that he becomes a mere repository of the dry bones of dead theories, instead of the possessor of living knowledge. The artist has a future, a vision of unrealized beauty before his eyes, an ideal in his heart. It may bring ever a haunting sense of pain; it may seem sometimes like the agony of a dumb man to speak, but the highest things do not bring unmixed bliss. It is when he ceases to have his future that he can become an art-critic by a prescribed rule of three, or a pot-boiler for a Philistine market.

The man who has no to-morrow can become a suicide, if he have a keen enough perception of the fact that for him life has ended already. At bottom everything depends on hope. Let a man keep his expected end and he will labour

and plan and think, and if need be scorn delights and live laborious days. Kill hope in man and his life loses coherence, meaning, purpose. The mainspring of it is gone: the heart is taken out of it, and true activity dies. When all else is taken away, all that men cherish and desire, all the natural joy and light of life, however dark it be in the present, if hope be left, "there is a budding morrow in midnight."

The quality of the hope is the measure of the life. We can accurately judge ourselves by the colour our future takes to us, and by the kind of lure to which we are responding. If we are honest and sincere enough to acknowledge our real ambitions and desires and declare to ourselves the sort of hope which is the mainspring of our action, we at last know ourselves. Our ambitions may be unworthy not because they are evil in themselves but because they are inadequate. We are built on too big a scale to be satisfied with little ends and petty hopes. The tragedy of loving the world and what are called the things of the world is not that the world is evil but that it is transient. It does not last; it passes away and its lust and love.

To build the life wholly there is to build on sand for a foundation. In the long run our worth as men is a spiritual value. Anything else is to make life a beggarly gathering of husks, the husks that the swine do eat. The true lure of the Open Door touches our future with a light that never was on sea or land, so that life is ennobled by high thoughts and great passions and generous aspirations.

It may be that some readers may complain of the figure of the Open Door as vague, and may feel that the vagueness is not confined to the title. There may be no real answer in saying that it was chosen because it was vague, but it is a true answer. It needs to be vague if it is going to appeal to all of us with our varied circumstances. It is purposely vague, that we may translate it for our own needs and interpret it for our own life. We make an idol of what we call the practical, and think that all counsel worth while must be in detail. The truth is that the details never fit other situations; for life never duplicates itself. Life does not run in straight lines but breaks through

and over all our containing and confining formulas. There is an appearance of great lucidity in the treatment of some subjects by division into neat little compartments under four or five heads. That may be convenient and useful, and no harm is done provided that we do not assume that the subject is exhausted by our analysis.

Another of our intellectual superstitions is that to have proper definitions is the way to concord and agreement. It is a commonplace to say that, if we will only define our terms and keep on defining them, there would be an end to our intellectual squabbles, as there would be nothing to fight about. It is strange that we should think this, since it is the opposite of all our experience. As a matter of fact it is usually at the moment when we begin to define that we begin to fight. Take for example the Church, about which so much warfare has been waged. We all know what the Church is as the instrument for the coming of the Kingdom on earth, and we can all praise and pray and worship and work together on that general basis. As soon as we begin to define it in our

creeds and stand by our high or low or broad doctrine of it, the fight begins. In Union Theological Seminary, New York, there are more than twenty different denominations represented in the student body, studying to be ministers of the various churches, and it is a gracious sign of the times that this should be possible. They have no difficulty in knowing what the Church is, because they see it in the mass and not as a logical definition.

All the great things in life are vague because they are too big to be put in a definition. How will we define truth, or honour, or love? So with the attitude of hope suggested by the figure of the Open Door. We can translate it for our own needs, and can apply it to our own situation however special it may seem. It may come as a word of hope and comfort at a time when we are inclined to bemoan the past and to be half afraid of the future. We may look back with regret and remorse at what we have missed and what we have lost and what we in folly have thrown away, and the coming days are dark before us. It is much to know that we have new opportunity, and a fresh chance

to redeem the time. We have been unprofitable servants and faithless stewards, but we may serve yet, and may still prove worthy. If the thought of the past is a misery because of its barrenness, there is a door out of the past with all its failure and sorrow and sin. If we feel hampered and limited so that we can hardly believe that there can be for us a future worth having, there is an escape from all that hinders and entangles, a way out of all that narrows and cramps. Life, like the world, is not static but dynamic, and there are forces that liberate and redeem. We can interpret the promise by our brightest hopes, leaving our figure in its vague grandeur; for it means hope and we are saved by hope. There is a door out of the dark into the light, out of the storm into peace, out of fear into courage, out of bondage into liberty, out of distress into joy. We need not walk forever under a leaden sky and on a sodden earth, shut in by an ever narrowing horizon. We can translate it how we will, and paint it as big and as broad and as glorious as we like. There is a door into a spacious place, into a fresh accession of power, into the house

of our hearts, the place of our prayers and aspirations.

Perhaps the objection of some is not that the promise is vague and general, but that it conflicts with experience. They are growing cautious and refuse to be lured on by idle hopes. It will only be as before, and nothing much comes of entering anywhere. They never seem to get nearer the heart of things and always seem to be outside, even when they have gone through what looked like an open door. The trouble here seems to be that so many of us will insist on viewing life as something static. An experience is looked on as something to have and to have done with. The realization of a hope means to them reaching a place where they can *stay*. Even religion means getting something and then getting over it. So, everywhere we find people trying to live on some past experience. It is always something that has been to them, not something that is, and is to be. They think only of arriving and then remaining. All that is vain endeavour in a world which is the product

of ceaseless force and in life which never remains. No wonder they always feel outside.

That is where we ought always to be, still with something beyond us, something just ahead of us. Nowhere does our static view play such mischief as in the region of religion. The very sacredness of the subject induces us to think of it as fixed and permanent, as something which cannot be touched. It comes to be a kind of impiety to criticize or to suggest that at any one place it can be altered. Places and days and creeds and books and institutions become sacred, to be viewed with awe as things apart. They may well be considered sacred in the true sense, valued and used as enriched by their gracious associations, but not with the superstitious reverence which sets them out of the stream of life. The fatal result is that religion itself becomes a thing apart from real life.

It is all part of the struggle between the life and the institution which we see everywhere. A great vision of liberty creates for a country a noble constitution, which then gets on a pedestal, and in time endangers the very liberty

which produced it. A deep sense of justice creates laws, which may later minister often to injustice. A great religious experience produces a literature fragrant with the dew of living religion, and the literature can be used to darken and depress all further experience. Religious thought constructs a magnificent creed which adequately represents the thinking of its day, and then the creed can become an instrument to throttle thought and chain the mind of man. Religious life creates a church with its offices and rites and forms, and the church can become the enemy of true religion. Life everywhere naturally and of necessity embodies itself in institutions, but the institution often tries to kill the life that bore it. All because we think in terms of statics and try to stop short, when there is no stopping place at all.

It is here that the lure of the Open Door is so necessary. Life must be allowed to go on creating the institutions needed now. For all real purposes it has become death when we refuse to let it change and alter according to its needs. We can live for a time on our capital

politically and morally and spiritually, but it is only an uneasy semblance of real life. We can blunder along by the momentum of the past, but we cannot even blunder far till the machine breaks down. Our new thoughts of freedom must reconstruct for us new forms for government and for industry. Our new ideals of justice and new compunctions about injustice must embody themselves in juster laws and fairer conditions. Our new vision must realize itself in a social structure that will stand the stress and strain better. Our vital religion must revive and renew its institutions for the living needs of our day. Timid conservative souls dread change, but it is their only chance for life that they be exposed to the full blast of the spiritual forces that sweep through our world.

So in the personal life it is no objection that they never seem to attain when they have moved forward once to the lure of the Open Door, and that they are still outside. Of course they are; for that is where they should be. The whole life of faith is a series of new beginnings. We cannot live off last year's ex-

perience any more than off yesterday's dinner. In religion we seem to think that it is enough to have had one experience of forgiveness or love or joy, and then we are done with it. We even speak of getting religion as a man falls into a fortune which he can now put out to interest. Rather it is a series of new beginnings—new repentance, new hope, new faith, new love, new insight, new obedience, new service, accepting new opportunities. It is not entering once for all through a door into rest and peace, and quiescence of soul, and torpidity of life. "Not as though I had attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after," cried Paul as he pressed towards still another open door of faith and service. We can face the future with bright hope, if we will accept the primal faith that life has a genuine and gracious meaning, and the world has at its heart a purpose of good. If hopes may be dupes it is also true that fears may be liars, and it is better even to be duped with hope than to become craven with fear. We can believe, and can live out the faith, that there is a sphere for us, and a discipline, and a place in the

great purpose of love. By living out that faith, we put it to the test of truth, and find that it proves itself in life.

Our most imminent danger is to assume that the elusive quality of life is merely illusion. We do not want to be silly dupes, led blindly to empty ends. When we have responded to the lure, we are tempted to be contemptuous of our own foolishness in expecting too much. We are disillusioned, and the whole moral tone suffers from the shock. This exhaustion of feeling with similar weakening of morale can be easily parallelled, not only in the history of nations, but in the experience of all of us who have experienced anything. In times of exaltation life is easy, and faith is natural in the pleasant exercise of hope and joy. Nothing is hard in such times when the meagre stale ways of custom take the attraction of a country of romance. In the first flush of triumph, in the inspiration of a great resolve, in the glow of an ardent consecration, it is easy to mount on wings as eagles, to run and not be weary; but when the task pulls itself out in seemingly end-

less length, when the road winds up over the rugged shoulder of the hill, when the glory of the vision fades into the common light of day, then comes the constant trial of endurance, and it is hard even to walk and not faint.

It is common in history to find spasms of great feeling succeeded by times of disillusionment, as if emotion had spent itself. An age of faith is often followed by an age of indifference, and after a period of reformation men often lose heart as to the value of what has been done. The road which led for a time in the clear crisp air of the uplands comes down again to the low levels. When a nation passes through a great trial and a great triumph, enthusiasm runs high, but when the glow of the triumph wears off and only the exhaustion of the trial is left, the real time of difficulty comes. Disappointment breeds doubt, or despair. The uplifting inspiration is gone and the experience seems only as a tale that is told.

In some directions this can be said of the present time in which we live. Men to whom a form was once living find that it no longer expresses the same meaning to them, and yet

they have not got it filled with new meaning. They stick to the form in a lifeless way, or else, it may be, they discard it altogether. To many the Christian doctrines and worship are meaningless because they have been disillusioned. They find nothing in them commensurate with the promise of religion. They have lost faith all round, and the mood reflects itself in every sphere of life. We no longer believe with the simple faith of old, nor expect such great things. Early faith has been clouded and high effort paralyzed by the hard facts of experience.

In *political economy* men, who began with an implicit trust in the law of progress, see how little has been effected by even a great reform. They are disappointed by the small results, and are easily tempted to cease striving for more. In *education* men, who began with a complete trust in the power of education to redeem life from grossness, see how little change a generation of it has made in the life of the people, and are no longer inspired with their first ideal. In *science* men, who were fired with the hope of all that might be done by extracting the

secrets of nature and harnessing her hidden powers to the use of man, see how all the electrical and mechanical inventions of our age can leave human life in essence where it was, and so they give themselves up to the material side of science, looking upon their first ideal as a day-dream. In *religion* men, who began with the heavenly vision and a sense of high consecration, learn how hard it is to keep the heights, and are disillusioned as they slide slowly into conformity with their environment. It is difficult to keep our faith in anything, and so the worldly and careless life finds many and easy victims.

The terrible disillusionment of life! Is there a sphere which escapes the lowering process, a region of thought or work, a relationship, even the holiest, where the degradation is not possible? Business, religion, friendship, marriage, personal honour, social service, in each separate department of life, there can be deterioration of ideal. Everywhere there are shipwrecks of lives that seemed safe by the early vision. We see high ardour quenched, blazing zeal grow cold, early faith fail, enthusiasm dwindle, the

glory die out of youthful eyes. We see once eager recruits drop out of the ranks. We see those who aimed at high emprise become content with commonplace ways. The young man, whose heart has been filled with the passion of discipleship, cannot imagine himself in this state of indifference, but it is well to warn him that it may be so. The stage of something like disillusionment seems almost inevitable.

The remedy is to see it as part of the discipline of life, and its purpose is to drive us to a deeper kind of faith. When a vision fails, it is because a truer and higher vision is possible. It is a call, not to renounce the ideal, but to make it nobler and larger. In spite of all the disasters that overtake idealism, it is the root of all human progress, in art and knowledge and social living. At our peril it is true we move to the lure of the Open Door, but at our greater peril we refuse it. Divine discontentment with what is, alone has saved the race from stagnation and death. The very illusiveness of life is designed to tempt us on when we would give up.

Much of the tragedy of life is that men give

up so soon and relinquish the long seeking. We are content too easily with a state which rebukes us and with conditions which we know to be indefensible. Everywhere our broken purposes of good have withered before the fruitage. Everywhere work only begun or only half done taunts us with our futility. Better to have gone on and failed than to have turned aside in weakness or despair. We do not know when we might have made the great discovery or achieved the great task, if only we had gone on. We do not know at what turn of the road the gleaming towers of the City of God might have flashed on our eager eyes.

> Now I hear it not, but loiter
> Gaily as before.
> Yet sometimes I think, and thinking
> Makes the heart so sore —
> Just a few steps more
> And there might have dawned for me
> Blue and infinite, the sea.

VII

The Door of Opportunity

Turning, for them who pass, the common dust
Of servile opportunity to gold.

—*Wordsworth.*

VII

THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY

N a Greek city many centuries ago there stood a statue, which was called Opportunity. The statue itself illustrates the old lesson that opportunity passes, for nothing remains of it, and only the inscription is left to tell us what it was like. The figure stood on its toes in the very act of departing, with wings on its feet. There was a large lock of hair on the forehead, while the head was bald at the back. The following conversation is supposed to take place between it and the passer-by:

Statue, what is thy name?

I am called Opportunity.

Who made thee?

Lysippus.

Why standest thou on thy toes?

Because I stay but a moment.

Why hast thou wings on thy feet?

To show that I pass quickly.
Why is thy hair long on thy forehead?
That men may seize me when they meet me.
Why, then, is thy head so bald behind?
When I once have passed I cannot be caught.

It is of course part of the world's most ancient wisdom that time is on the wing, and that opportunity stays but a moment. Among that ancient wisdom there is a sentence of Pliny the Elder, "It is a maxim universally agreed upon in agriculture that nothing must be done too late: and again that everything must be done at its proper season; while there is a third precept which reminds us that opportunities lost can never be regained."

There may not be much help for life in such wise saws, that in order to succeed a thing must not be done too soon, or too late, and yet must be done. We can take ourselves too seriously, though perhaps we cannot be too serious about life as a whole. It is a little like being told that the perfect golf stroke is made by hitting the middle of the ball with the middle of the club at the middle of the swing. The average man feels that these three things rarely

come together at the same time, and when they do it is by a happy fluke. If he gets too nervous about the perfect timing, he probably misses altogether. Some of the teaching about opportunity only results in making some of us nervous; for we feel we have no chance with a flying figure of winged feet, whose single lock we must grasp on the hop. It only makes us irresolute to be told that our chance comes in a moment, and in a moment is gone.

It would be easier if we knew what was opportunity. We cannot always recognize it when we see it, and we have not the advantage of being able to interrogate it and be sure of its name. It is easy to be wise after the event, and it is usually only after the event that we can see what was the very crisis of the business. We cannot afford to miss our opportunities, and we do not know what are our opportunities—that is the kind of fix in which life puts us. Things do not come labelled and named for our convenience, and it does not help much, except to engender vain regret, to be told that we missed the tide at its flood. There is a tragic way of speaking about oppor-

tunity as if it came to us once disguised, and then taunted us when we clawed vainly at the bald head, not having been alert enough to catch the hair on the forelock.

The tendency of some of the teaching is to make some take very *short views of life.* The moral to them of the fact that time is on the wing is to snatch the day, and exhaust swiftly all the experiences and pleasures possible. Herrick's song, "To the Virgins to make much of Time," is in line with that moral,

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
> Old Time is still a-flying,
> And this same flower that smiles to-day
> To-morrow will be dying.

Yet the copy-book moralists, who underline for us the phrase to watch and seize opportunity, would admit that this was a false application of the counsel. The short views of life, which sometimes seem so wise, are in the long run convicted of folly. The same copy-book moralists are largely to blame by interpreting opportunity in such an external way. Life itself is our opportunity, and not just single incidents in it and single phases of it. The incidents and

the phases may obscure the whole, as we can fail to see the wood because of the trees. Life is short and art is long, but the art of life is also long, and the artist is not made nor marred in one trial. The learning and the mastery of his art will last him his life long. It is not true that everything is staked as on the cast of the dice. We can take comfort from the thought that even mistakes can be retrieved, and that opportunities are renewed, and life is very patient with her children.

The false teaching is responsible for much unhappiness and for some despair. Hardly a day passes but we hear of men and women, sometimes even the young, giving up the unequal struggle of life on account of some blunder or some disappointment. They lose heart because they think it irremediable, and believe that they have forfeited the one and only chance. Life has nothing further to offer them and the door is shut in their face. They collapse before the black thought that the true end has come, now that they have failed in the crisis. A business reverse, a disappointment in

love, a sudden weakness in the hour of temptation, an unexpected defeat, a blight of ambition, even a social gaucherie, will darken the whole world and convince them that all is lost. It is caused by a false perspective, and rightly viewed some of the things that brought despair would be laughed at. A little humour, especially the humour that sees the comedy of some of our tragedy, is a valuable quality to encourage. All is not lost, even if that particular occasion be lost. The bald head of that flying figure can pass into space, but the rich procession of life has not stopped. Other junctures emerge, and other occasions arise, and other doors open, and other opportunities offer.

It is true that there are critical times in every life and points of special significance. Men sometimes look back and see where the tide turned, and where their venture was won or lost. Even so, they did not know it at the time, and only see it afterwards. The important thing is our *attitude to life* in general, and not how we met a special occasion. That was only part of the whole, and the general attitude to life settled the particular case. Much of

the importance of single steps is due to an illusion, caused by distance as we look back. Other and different steps would probably have taken us to pretty much the same place, being such persons as we are. Successful merchants love to recall the turning point of their career, and tell the world how the way they used the first thousand dollars which they earned settled everything. It is difficult for us to see how with their capacity for acquisition they could ever have failed to become what they are. Some of the lesser mortals who have not achieved such shining success never could follow in their footsteps, some because they would never want, others because they have a different conception of opportunity altogether. They may well refuse to be judged by that standard of success.

It makes for courage and hope to realize that opportunity is not one thing that comes but once, to tantalize us with the vision of its bald head departing. We are never without opportunities while we draw breath, and our biggest opportunity is our general view of life. If no man should presume on the assumption

that nothing matters one way or the other, no man need despair because he has missed chances which others have grasped. All is lost, only if hope be lost, and hope remains as life opens her doors and beckons us to enter. There is lavish supply for all the deep human needs, and our share awaits us. It only needs courage to face life manfully, and courage is but another name for faith—the primal faith that life is supremely worth while and is an arena for high thought and noble action. When he comes up to the House Beautiful lions growl and frighten the poor timid pilgrim, but when he takes heart of grace and comes right up, he sees that the lions are chained and the door is open with a gracious welcome.

All the doors of the world are open to every son of man in his measure. All life's great things are cheap, to be had for the asking. Another man may own the land, but he cannot own the landscape—sometimes he is almost the only person who does not know that there is a landscape. I have known a man who spent lavishly on making a beautiful garden, which

was enjoyed by every one except himself. He merely did it, because it was the thing to do, and he had the wherewithal to do it. The beauty of earth and the glory of sky are there for all who have eyes to see. The pleasures of memory and imagination and affection can be indulged in by all. Flowers and birds and little children delight all who have the heart to enjoy. The strength of friendship and the joy of comradehood are not confined to the rich, indeed are rarely found there in their fairest flower. Even the limited democracy we now have has made it possible for most to enter into the joys opened by reading and music, and the greatest art of the world after all is open to the public, and all great artists have really worked for the public. Complete democracy when it comes will still further open wide all the doors into the richest possibilities of human life.

It is the vision of that future which alone enlists the support of many high souls to all popular causes. There are conditions to-day born of the greed and selfishness and stupidity of men, which shut many of the doors of oppor-

tunity on the mass. There is a labour which brutalizes, though even then we cannot forget that there is an idleness and luxury which rot out the soul more surely than any hard lot of undue toil. The one is perdition, while the other is only deprivation. We do not forget that pathways to true opportunity are blocked to many jaded workers, and above all to many victims of our present muddled social state. Even some who are not classed with the "under dog" of modern industry are impoverished by the exacting nature of much modern business, and think themselves too tired by the strain of work to enter into the heritage of human joy. But it is true that, even with things as they are, all of us have more open doors of real opportunity than we ever enter. Charles Lamb, who complained for himself of the dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood and declared that it was Sabbathless Satan who first invented work, cannot be said to have been deprived of life's best chances. We think of his rich nature, and happy friendships, and intellectual joys, and sweet spirit of sacrifice. When at last he was relieved from the bondage

of his office desk, he confessed he was at loose ends, and did not much enlarge his opportunities for the deeper and higher life.

Toil may be unsevered from tranquillity, and may only give zest to the pursuit of all that is best in the world. I once knew a Scottish mechanic in a factory town who had so developed his interest in the flora and fauna of the district that what looked to me a common ditch weed told to him its beautiful story, so that every country walk he took was a source of unfailing delight. The copy-book moralists tell us to *look out* for opportunities, as if life were only a scramble in the great game of beggar-my-neighbour. Whatever happens to outward social conditions, it will always remain true that we must *look in* for our real opportunities. All life's great things are cheap, to be had by all who seek. We cannot buy love, nor sell it, though we try too often in our pitiful fashion. There is no purchase price for peace in the world's coin. We may pay for distractions and pleasures, but never for joy and lasting happiness. Nobody can shut and lock the door in our face.

There is a great opportunity before man in society to-day, created by causes too complex to trace in detail, by the fierce revolt of the dispossessed, by the general unrest of some classes, by the compunction of some of the favoured, and by the inspiring vision of religion in some. We are being forced to admit the failure of our civilization. We are compelled to open our eyes to some of the plague spots in our cities, and to acknowledge that there exist conditions that taint human life at its source. There is a cry for justice stronger than any appeal for charity has ever been. There is a demand for redress of wrongs and for the removal of the disabling conditions, that hamper the poor and that blight the young. The demand is that society must be so ordered that every one shall have a chance of realizing his self and living an unmaimed human life. There is much preventable pain, and consolable sorrow, and remediable wrong. There are many, among those who feel themselves entangled by the machinery of the present order, who would welcome any change that promises abatement of existing evil.

The social opportunity will not be adequately met if we merely think of a material Utopia, a secular society whose sole ideal is an ample sufficiency of "bread and games." It would warrant Carlyle's taunt about the lubberland of bliss and the reformers who think only of a millennium of ease and never of a millennium of holiness. Man will never live, to be called living, by bread alone. There will remain immedicable pain, and sorrow that man cannot assuage, and hunger that earth cannot satisfy. There will still remain the visions of his high heart that can never be fulfilled on that material plane. Of course some may have an ideal of life which makes this seem absurd, and they cannot imagine what a man needs more than to be rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and cannot see what more a bird needs than to have a gilded cage with hempseed plentiful and water sure. But that ideal has never yet sufficed for man, whatever it may be for canaries! "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him?" To know the things of a man you have to look below the smiling surface of cir-

cumstance; and when you see below, it is as a soul in prison.

We will miss some of our social opportunity if we fail to aim high enough, and think only of the economic side of life. There are times in history when we see that the world has lost some of its opportunity when in the spasm of change. The French Revolution, which took to devouring its own children, is a case in point. It disappointed its best friends, and though in some things it liberated man from bondage, in other things it fastened the chains more securely and hindered true freedom. Some of the ultra-conservatism imbedded in the Constitution and the institutions of the United States came from the dismay at the fundamental failure of the French Revolution. The world's redemption, which demands the frank and fearless change of social and industrial order, needs something more profound than only material reconstruction. It needs enlightenment of conscience, and restoration of soul, and renewal of moral life. Mr. H. G. Wells says, perhaps with some sadness but certainly with great insight, "I recognize quite clearly that with people just as

they are with their prejudices, ignorances, misapprehensions, their unchecked vanities, greeds and jealousies, their crude and misconstructed instincts, their irrational traditions, no Socialist state can exist, no better state can exist than the one you have now with all its squalor and cruelty." We ought not blindly to let ourselves suffer the certain disillusionment that must follow, if our thought of a new social order is only economic.

This does not alter the fact that the opportunity is before us, and the only point at issue is whether we will miss our chance of being pathfinders for the world. America has been so favoured that she might have tried out more fundamental experiments, instead of only duplicating the conditions and problems of the old world. We have built our life on the same model, and the same difficulties confront us to-day—the same privileged classes, the same labour strife, the same social maladjustment, the same rampant individualism, the same city slums, and all the old brood. Already we are outdistanced by radical experiments elsewhere in social legislation. Static conditions all over

the world are breaking down, and new forces are at work. The only question is whether intellect and heart and spirit here will face the situation and reach the solution we need, or whether other instruments will be found. Other hands will stretch to the work; other hearts will bend to the burden and be crowned by the glory. There are others ready when the nerveless hands let go their grip. It is well to bear this in mind in this our time of pride and of probation as a nation. We are not essential. What is essential is that righteousness should be done, and that the highest interests of the world should be conserved and advanced.

In Scotland years ago I used to look to America with her wonderful opportunities to solve some of the problems of life. She has done something to help on international peace, though nothing like so much as might have been expected with her historical and geographical advantages. She has helped a little to break down some racial barriers, especially between the East and the West, though she has not lived up to one tithe of her own great profession, as is amply testified by the common

sentiment about the Japanese. But what has she done to protect the weak and the poor from corporate greed, and to put social and industrial life on a rational and just basis? It is true that America has offered advantages to countless people to better their condition, but the chief credit is again geographical. With a continent to exploit and the untold riches of a bountiful nature to gather, America might well be called the Country of Opportunity, but surely there is a higher kind of opportunity which was before her and still is hers—to work out a nobler type of life, and to build a juster state of society, and to bless the whole world with her polity. Many a time I have thrilled to the thought and the courage of the lines of an American poet, who has always been better appreciated in England than in his own country,

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over
there beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal and the burden and
the lesson,
Pioneers, O pioneers.

Are the pioneers themselves to halt, as the elder races with new courage address themselves to the work? Are the pioneers to be the first to weary, and to think they have exhausted opportunity by merely extracting the wealth of a virgin continent?

In our individual life also there come opportunities, which we may miss because we have such false standards by which we judge things. We wait for the great event and for the great occasion, and we call that great which makes a big splash in the world. Or, when the trial comes we shrink from it through false modesty, saying to ourselves that some other more worthy instrument should be chosen. If our general attitude were right, we would see the meaning of all that is called opportunity. We are not alive to the gracious possibilities of the unregarded chances of every day. We need a more solemn sense of responsibility, a more serious view of the ever-constant junctures that occur. There is no great or small in life in view of the future. Who knoweth what is to turn out great or small to us? Who knoweth

whether this seemingly trivial turning-point is not after all the very crisis of our fate? Who knoweth whether this time when we are tempted to turn aside from the path of duty is not the very fruition of life for us, the one great golden opportunity which we barter for soulless ease or sell for a mess of pottage, or lose without even the pottage for a recompense?

That there are critical times in the lives of all we know, but we cannot easily put our finger on the point when we took time by the forelock and refused to let it go unblessed, or when we lost the occasion and must go to our graves the poorer for it. We cannot afford to miss our opportunities, and we cannot tell what are our opportunities. All life is our opportunity. Every change, every discipline, every call of duty, every burden of responsibility, every leading of providence, every token of grace, every human relationship, every divine prompting, every voice of conscience, all these are open doors which lead out into the light. Life is poor and petty to many of us, a thing of routine:

> The dull mechanic pacing to and fro,
> The set gray life, the apathetic end.

We do not see the glory in the grayness. We miss the beauty in the dust, the music in the din, and fail to catch the great meaning of the whole. We do not see that the world can become to us one great revelation, and life one great opportunity for service. We think life mean and prosaic, when it is fraught with eternal consequences, and burdened with infinite possibilities. Fools and blind and slow of heart to believe, the whole world is vocal with music, life is fragrant with the divine, time is freighted with eternity, every human relationship recalls us to our higher relationship, every discipline is full to the brim of possible blessing, every loss carries a gain in its bosom, every duty is a privilege, every responsibility is an opportunity. It is our attitude to life in the mass that is important; for when we have that, the particular case will be met aright.

For all of us in our measure the door of *truth* opens, which is something bigger than knowledge. Some doors of special knowledge are shut to many through circumstances.

They cannot expect to rival the opportunities of men who through leisure and training are scholars and investigators. But truth, though it is fed by knowledge, is something to be, rather than to know. It is more an ethical than a mental possession. We can cultivate intellectual veracity and moral courage, which will enable us to see and think straight, to act and will truly. We need this in affairs of church and state, in personal and social life.

Among other things it helps to open the door also into *peace*. Peace of mind and conscience and heart depends largely on loyalty to truth. There is the peace of a good conscience which no one can pilfer from us, the peace that comes from a heart at rest. There are times when religion and ethics and the highest purpose of a man's life are seen, not as three different points of view, but as one. They are fused into one bright light. It is not in moments of mystic ecstasy or of sublimated feeling that this is best seen, but when a man sees duty clear, and feels himself in line with the great power that controls the universe. Such times we see in the life and work

of Abraham Lincoln. To the casual eye he often appeared a mere opportunist, and American public opinion sometimes condemned him as such, but there was an inward consistence which saved him from ever being a time-server in any sense. He knew the purity of his purpose, and believed with all his soul that his purpose was somehow in keeping with the great power in the world that makes for righteousness. So he could speak quite simply and humbly yet confidently of being on the side of God.

There is a door into *love* which is open to all. The secret is not to get love but to give it, to cultivate sympathy and a spirit of goodwill. Nearly all the happiness of life comes through our relations with others, and if these are right our felicity is assured. We are bound up in a bundle of life and everything depends on how we accept our social intercourse. In the home life, in friendship, in the varied associations with others for all sorts of purposes, we find true satisfaction of our nature. Without this no personal success can avail. Failure in the one region of the family will

embitter and cloud the fairest prospect. This common source of happiness is independent of many other gifts of fortune; indeed the most tragic failures are often noted in circles of great wealth. In the groups also which compose social life, the associations with others in work and play, in the pursuit of common purposes whether intellectual or political or religious, a right attitude is of immense importance. Happiness is the fruit of our whole reaction to life, and the problem is not merely a bread and butter one. Much of our uneasiness and distress come from false relations with others, offenses against the spirit of good-will, failure to play our part rightly in social life. We alone can permanently and completely shut the door of opportunity against ourselves.

For all of us also there stands a great and effectual door of *service*. Without this the way into love might be only a way into a subtle selfishness, which in the long run would defeat its end. The good-will that nowhere issues in service is mere sentimentalism. In the exercise of love, in the outflow of good-will, we find the source of our best joy. The reason

is not far to seek. Happiness comes from activity, the outgoing of energy, and is really not a matter of income but of output. Mere passive enjoyment passes very swiftly into the dreariest and deadliest weariness. Happiness is related to the purpose of a life, and the bigger the purpose the more chance for its permanence. This is why the pursuit of a great religious purpose that transcends personal ends fills a life with undiminishing joy. On every side lie opportunities to take our share of service, and to give some contribution to the world. No life is so humble, and no gifts so meagre, and no lot so narrow, that they do not afford play for the exercise of this ideal. A man is judged by his spirit, and the spirit is known by its fruits. The test of a life is its love, and love is measured by service. The door is open.

VIII

The Adventure of the Open Door

Why should a man whose blood is warm within
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

—*Shakespeare.*

VIII

THE ADVENTURE OF THE OPEN DOOR

HERE are some attractive figures, who walk through life with the freedom and grace born of high courage. They keep to the end the fresh zest of living, meeting experience with a gay and even joyous air. They seem to be filled with love of life, and yet are without fear of death. They never seem to lose the sense of adventure, and they meet life as a Knight of chivalry sought danger to display his courage. The very precarious tenure by which life is held only seems to be a spur to put them on their mettle. The uncertainty of the future acts as a tonic, nerving them to joyful effort. The first early thrill of wonder at the strange beauty of the world is never deadened. They do not want to shirk all that is coming to them, and they take the hard knocks as smilingly as the successes. They are ready even to venture the

certain for the uncertain, like Shakespeare's schoolboy, who when he had lost one shaft shot another to find it, "and by adventuring both I oft found both." There may sometimes be a little of the gambler's spirit in this, but the gambler's spirit is only a true one perverted.

Such debonair figures are too rarely seen; for most of us too soon lose the expectant air and forget the early rapture. The light passes too soon into dull commonplace; and we travel little in the uplands. The sense of adventure is lost without regret; for we prefer to play safe. The precarious tenure of our hold on life is a subject which we do not desire to think of more than we can help. When we are compelled to consider it, we view it with a deep dismay, and are intimidated at the thought of the possible perils and nameless evils that may be met. We feel that the best plan is to move cautiously and avoid all needless risks. It is better to be safe than sorry. "There is a strong feeling in favour of cowardly and prudential proverbs," says Robert Louis Stevenson. "The sentiments of a man while he is full of ardour and hope are to be received, it is

supposed, with some qualification. But when the same person has ignominiously failed and begins to eat up his words, he should be listened to like an oracle. Most of our pocket wisdom is conceived for the use of mediocre people, to discourage them from ambitious attempts, and generally console them in their mediocrity."

Stevenson is himself a good illustration of the type, who look on life with adventurous eye. He had little use for what Whitman calls the literature of woe, and as little for the puling and whining at our lot or at our age. He was always ready to say a good word for life, and thought our little poets with their doleful music should be sent to look at the ploughman and learn wisdom. The common sources of human happiness remain, and the wonderful pageant of consciousness is richer than ever, and life deserves to be faced with a brave vivacious note of courage. He proved his theory by his practice, and bore out in life what he held in creed. It was not the breezy thoughtless optimism of the broad-chested squire who never knew the temptation to sickly sentimentalism. He did more than a man's work under disabilities of

physical weakness, sometimes of disabling pain, in exile far from many things he loved best, all without any pose as a martyr or a hero. He simply acted his own creed that it is better to live and be done with it, than to die daily in the sick-room. He preferred the brave and spirited termination to a miserly hoarding of the last few gasps. He fought with courage against hard odds, and gave some of his own brave cheer to others. Even if death were near, he thought that life would go down with better grace "foaming in full body over a precipice, than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas."

To take life with full confidence that it is worth while, to put the whole weight upon the assumption that it is worth while, to try that faith out to its conclusion, is what in essence we mean by the adventure of the Open Door. The real alternatives are not faith or unfaith—it is *faith* anyway. Another may if he likes put the weight of his life on the opposite assumption that what looks like meaning and value and purpose are only delusion. But that

attitude is just as much faith as the other. There is no profound intellectual quality about that to warrant the superior air. As a fact it often means a craven refusal to take life at its highest pitch. It is just as much a venture of faith as the other, only it is faith in the value of the doubts and disillusions instead of the instincts and the first welcoming trust of the soul. The grace and truth and beauty and goodness of our experience are all supposed to be hiding some treachery for the man who is taken in by them. They will play him false, if he trusts them too blandly.

Over against that faith, which seems born of spiritual fatigue, is the faith in the real value of life. It is however not something to be passively accepted and enjoyed, but something to be achieved and attained, so that victory may be snatched even from the jaws of defeat. Life gives us back what we bring to it. It mirrors back to us the very attitude with which we approach it. There is no map of life with all its continents surveyed, and all its peaks scaled, and all its valleys measured, and all the shoals and depths of its seas sounded. That map will

never be made; for it would only be possible if life were static—and then it would not be life. Thus, the true temper to meet it is in a spirit of adventure, not as a gamble, but believing in the worth of experience.

This faith, like anything else, proves itself by being put to the test. The everlasting spirit of youth—*das Ewigjungendliche*—seems to suit the situation and to be at home among the facts. The world is so rich, with such infinite variety of scene and incident and appearance. It appeals to constant curiosity, and incites new interest on every hand. Life clothes itself in endless forms. The earth and sky and sea are full of marvels. The childish thought that "the world is so full of a number of things" becomes truer with ever increasing knowledge and experience. Anything may happen in such a universe.

Human life too is rich with its wonderful procession of experience. Even for an observer of the cities and the ways of men there is spread out a drama and a spectacle such as never have been staged; while for a participant, who knows himself an actor in the

drama, there is no end of interest. The actors have no set pieces to speak and arranged scenes to fill, and have even many parts to play. In faithless moods men may sometimes say that there is nothing new under the sun, though we know as fact that there is nothing but the new. In prosaic moods we may say with Dr. Johnson that a blade of grass is always a blade of grass whether in one country or another, though we know that there are no two blades of grass alike even in the same field. Romance has not said farewell to the haunts of men. Life speaks to us with many voices, and not one of them without signification. It speaks to us in the world without and in the world within, by the infinitely little and the infinitely great. The human comedy appeals to laughter and tears, pity and pride; and above all calls to us to be more than mere spectators. We too are in the play, and must make our part in it as it goes along unrehearsed.

By faith the human mind makes its venture on the world for knowledge, and by faith the soul makes its venture on life. The true heart is not afraid to make either venture, and tastes

the relish of living. Last generation used to discuss solemnly and tragically the great question whether life is worth living, and wrote books and articles and poems on the theme. The only answer of any value was that of the wag, who replied that it all depended on the liver. The jaundiced eye will see everything blurred in a haze of yellow. The value of life will only be known by living, and the experiencing nature has at least all the chance there is. The temper therefore does not need justification which accepts gleefully the adventure of the Open Door. Indeed herein lies the chief difference among men, in their attitude to new knowledge and deeper tracts of feeling and higher levels of experience.

We pass it off as merely a matter of temperament, that one is constitutionally timid and another is by nature daring, that some are melancholy at the slightest excuse and others are sanguine. It is true that we cannot always control our moods and our feelings, any more than we can always control circumstances. We cannot live ever on one high plane. But we can cultivate even a mood, and can make it

a habitude of mind. Still more when it is not a question of a mere mood, but of a central faith. Our life follows the fortunes of our faith, and one brave push of trust will lead out into large and spacious ways. The cowardly proverbs that are current, asking anything for a quiet life, are answered by the bolder sayings which tell us that if we never venture we can never win. They wave the flag of adventure in the eyes of youth, and at least suggest a better ideal than the world's stale wisdom of stodgy respectability and cautious prudence.

What qualities should mark this attitude of adventure towards life and especially towards new experience? In deference to the world's rather sad wisdom, we will begin by saying that it should be marked by *seriousness*, though perhaps the solemn tone is more natural to the spectator than to the actor. When we move in a new direction meeting the future in untried ways, the uncertainty makes us serious, or at any rate makes our well-wishers serious. When the lad who has grown in thoughtless

serenity under the shelter of the home leaves it to build up his own life after his own design, it is an anxious time for all who love him. Many a tragic story gives ground for the anxiety. The novelty of the new manner of life may enchant the youthful mind, and he may meet the future in gay unconcern or even with eager greeting. He is going to learn something of the world and its ways. New faces have their attraction, and fresh scenes their fascination. The past is forgotten in the ardent longing for the future, and the present is the disagreeable interval which keeps him from the golden joys beyond. To walk along an untrodden path, to try what unknown fortune has in store, to reach out towards a new adventure, to fill the life with unfelt experiences —such prospect charms the heart of youth. Youth would take the plunge gaily, would dash through the river anyhow into the Promised Land. Time goes too slowly to suit the vaulting thoughts of youth. It creeps; it crawls; it has no hot blood in its sluggish veins. Youth does not like the space which is put between it and the Promised Land, a

tantalizing distance to a heart impatient with desire.

We do not live very long till we come to see the value of a breathing-space. After a little we do not court the future so rapturously. We are even glad of every chance we can get to know something of the way by which we must go. We may not fear the unknown, but our welcome of it is not so boisterous. We learn that a new opportunity is a new responsibility. The future no longer thrills us with desire, but calms us with solemnity. A new enterprise is not to be entered on lightly. There is much in it to make us serious, however much there may be to make us expectant. The Promised Land will have its dangers as well as the Desert. The future will have its trials and sorrows as well as the past. It is well that a little of the Present which bridges the gulf between the Past and the Future should be given to serious consideration.

The same is true, only on a larger scale, in the history of nations as of men. Many a time a nation has entered on great changes lightheartedly, which have killed its best sons in

the effort to undo the evil; or it has embarked on great schemes without counting the cost, and the cost has been its own national existence; or it has begun with hallelujahs a war which has ended with wails. A great nation must have learned seriousness, must not play with destiny; and while not afraid of any new undertaking to which it is called meets it calmly and thoughtfully, knowing it to be fraught with danger. We make our own history as nations and as men. We also make our own destiny. The true reading of history and of destiny does not consist of the events that have happened and will happen, but of the manner in which they are met, the spirit which pervades the meeting of them, the results they produce on character and life.

The seriousness, however, ought not to be allowed to rob us of resolution, but should only brace us to a firmer *courage*. Of course an experiment has elements of doubt, and nobody knows how a thing will work till it has been tried. The man who never made a mistake never made anything. The society that never

dared anything never did anything. We can tail along living off the experiences and the venturesome experiments of others, but if we lost nothing else we would lose the thrill of the wonder and the joy of discovery. The brass band may not be the whole procession, but at least they usually get more out of it than their tame followers. Adventure is the true scientific attitude towards life; for science only advances by experiment. It is true that there are risks, but because a chemist will sometimes blow himself up by a novel chemical composition does not stop experiments in chemistry. An experiment in social life may also go wrong by a wrong mixture of ingredients, but if we could not learn from our mistakes we could not learn at all. Any open door into the unknown is adventure, and adventure asks for courage. We will never know how anything will work until we put it to the test. Mankind is held in ancient grooves often through cowardice. Work passes into drudgery, because the dull mind does not see its broadening relations to the whole of man's life. Art grows sterile for lack of the creative spirit that will not be con-

tent with repetitions. Religion becomes convention, and instead of being never-ending inspiration imprisons the soul in routine.

If the adventure of life calls for seriousness and courage, it demands above all *decision*. We let our chances pass through sheer irresolution. We cannot make up our minds, and this is not always a sign of cowardice, nor always a mark of levity. However it comes, it explains much of the futility of life to most of us. The same parts are played over again with painful iteration on every stage of human history. Every attempt at reform, social, political, and religious, makes the same lines of cleavage. On the one side there is the passion of reform, and on the other side the passion of opposition; and in between the colourless immobile mass that are neither for nor against, and can be either. On every question, at every crisis, there are the ineffective, those who halt, are lame on both sides, and are of use to none, at least so far as active support is concerned. And it is not confined to great questions that only emerge at intervals. We see this temper

of indecision every day coming out in the characters of men, in a feckless inconclusiveness of life, meaning nothing in particular, seeing nothing clearly, from childhood to old age unresolved about the most serious things of life, always at a loss what to make of it when any occasion for choice occurs.

This infirmity of purpose, this irresolute halting ever between two opinions, is perhaps the most pernicious flaw of character possible, making the whole life futile. The faults open to the warm-blooded generous nature are serious enough, but for abiding mischief are not to be compared to the calculating selfishness which is ever tremulous to be on the strong side, or the weak vacillation revealing a grain of nature on which a fine character cannot possibly be cut. You can make nothing of mere negation. A ship can sail against wind and tide; but a log is as the surf of the sea itself, driven with the wind and tossed. A man of undecisive character loses what vital force he has, and is at the mercy of any outside influence that touches him. John Foster in his Essay on Decision of Character describes this helplessness

with his own fine keen quality of style, "A man without decision belongs to whatever can capture him; and one thing after another vindicates its right to him, by arresting him while he is trying to go on; as twigs and chips, floating near the edge of a river, are intercepted by every weed, and whirled in every little eddy."

This again we put down to temperament, our common refuge to-day from every burden of responsibility. There is much in temperament; and what is easy conquest to one is to another arduous toil. But not thus can we pass away from the subject of decision, and the opportunities which present themselves to us. That is to submit to be victims, and not the masters of our fate. Here as elsewhere our conduct affects our character, and indeed makes it, so far as we have the making of it in our own hands. A mean mind is made so by constant meannesses. A foul mind feeds itself on foulness. A selfish life becomes so by selfishness. A generous heart grows large by the exercise of itself. A strong character attains strength by continual decisions; as a child learns to walk by walking.

Nay, for the final cause of want of determination, and halting between two opinions, we must look to a deeper source than the excuse of temperament.

Indecision seems a special temptation of this age; since scientific method has affected all our thinking. Science demands proof, and is willing to wait any length of time for proof. There are some subjects about which the true attitude is one of balance of judgment. From the great increase of knowledge in our time we have got accustomed to holding our minds in suspense. So much depends on research and slow processes of discovery. Even on the subject of religion there are many things which do not press for an immediate decision. Many questions of creed and worship and church government, which so divide the Church, can stand. A man is quite within his rights if he suspends judgment on many questions both of scholarship and of theology, when no spiritual issue depends on them. But this legitimate and even necessary indecision has affected the greater matters of the law; and we have even an affectation of indecision, which is supposed to

be the correct and scientific attitude about both religion and life. Indeed we seem to be in a period of indifference, in politics and literature, and religion, and all the things about which men used to feel intensely. Enthusiasm is discounted amongst us; passion is despised; and the ideal seems to a languid tolerance, which plays at great realities, and which will neither assert nor deny. Such an attitude if persisted in is the ruin of all character, and an end to all true dignity of life. A lower depth than blatant unfaith is the moral apathy that makes light of distinctions.

The clue out of the difficulties about the things on which it is wise to exercise suspense of judgment is a simple one. There is always need for caution in things of intellect; but it is fatal policy in things of conscience. This is why religion demands decision, and gets it, whether we consciously decide or not; for it is in the first instance not a matter of intellectual conviction, but of moral will. It is not speculation, which can wait: it is life. All men mean to face up to the great questions of life before they die. But meantime there are things

of primary importance which they will secure first, and afterwards they will think of the other, when they have leisure and security of tenure. Men dream of a time when things will be easier for them, when the strain will be relieved, and they can get breathing-space to come to some definite decisions. As they are securing the means of living, life itself is slipping away from them. Those who halt, standing first on one foot and then on the other, do not really count in the game. The trimmers, the sitters on fences, the spectators do not count. The greatest question ever asked of man was, What shall it profit to gain the whole world and lose the soul? But men are everywhere losing the soul and not even getting the world. It is worse than tragedy, it is farce!

There are great things to be done in life, great decisions to be made, a great adventure to follow. Surely the poorest fate is to let judgment go against us by default. The way of courage is the way of faith, which declares for the worth of all human experience, which accepts a divine purpose, and is willing to stake all on

the hazard. There are two points in the adventure of the diver,

> One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge
> One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl.

To stand shivering on the brink of the great human experiences, to let doubt unnerve or fear daunt us, so that we refuse to cherish man's noblest hopes would be as futile as a diver who would never make a plunge. If we believe that life has pearls of truth and beauty and love and goodness, it is the part of wisdom to seek them. We will at least know the thrill of the adventure of the diver as we plunge.

IX

The Last Open Door

Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate: and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured.

—*Bunyan.*

IX

THE LAST OPEN DOOR

HAT have we to say about the last open door which stands for all men? Have we the same right to approach it with hope and expectancy? Does it too spell opportunity for the enlargement of life? It certainly differs from some others in this, that there is no choice given us, but we must enter whether we will or not. We are not offered an alternative; we are not asked whether we will consent to die. There are, however, alternatives as to how we meet it, and as to what it means for life. We may view it as a door leading to the end of all things, or as a new beginning. We may think of it with dread and unspeakable fear, or it may inspire in us hope. The thought of it may be like a death's head at the feast, spoiling the present, and weakening the future when it does come. Or the thought may bring peace, if not eager expectation.

It is natural to associate fear with death, which has been ever the background of life. When we look steadily at life we always see it against that background. Men are often able to forget it and are able sometimes to neglect it, simply leaving it out of account, but not forever. Sooner or later we come close to it and are compelled to consider it. Some day in the sunshine we are shocked with the sudden news of calamity. Somewhere in the music there sounds the deep tragic note. The first natural reaction is a shrinking as from a ruthless foe. A French writer says, "They call me a master because of some magic in my speech and thoughts, but I am a frightened child in the presence of death."

We may refuse to think of it, but one day we stand beside an open door, and the question again forces itself on us. We read and hear daily of catastrophes which are far off and do not touch us closely, until at last it comes so near that it touches us on our flesh and pierces to the quick. Even then we count on our own luck, and get back into life, shaking it off like a nightmare. But however delayed is the

personal problem, we know that at last we too must reach the place where we look out into the dark, and only one open door remains, which no human skill or art can avoid. All other ways are blocked, and when we pass through, the door is shut behind us which no man openeth.

The greatest fact of life is the fact of death. Yet on a surface view nothing seems to have less influence on actual conduct. We make our plans and lay out our projects without taking it into account. We go from a funeral to a feast without sense of incongruity. We transact our business on the assumption that we will be on the premises to-morrow or next week or next year. At the back of our head is the knowledge that at any moment it may be our turn to be singled out, but that possibility is never allowed to affect this day's proceedings.

Some small moralists have denounced us for levity or high-handed defiance because of this. But this common trait of human life justifies itself. It is not merely that life must go on, and the needs of life remain; but also it is

true natural philosophy. Endless precautions about contingencies, constant presentiments of possible evil would simply cut the nerve of living. In self-defense, if nothing else, man must walk boldly and attend to the affairs of life. All the more if life is to us an open door of opportunity and is a glorious adventure, the fit and proper attitude is the brave carriage that makes light of odds. Prudence alone would leave us a pretty dismal world.

At the same time the fact taken by itself does not do justice to the whole situation. It is merely a surface view, and we cannot assume that death has no real influence on men and that therefore we need take no account of it in our complete view. Death is always there as the background of life. It colours the whole environment. That is why our attitude to it is so important. In the long run what we have to say about it will determine even conduct. Death is the greatest adventure in life, and to have faced it and settled how it must be met is the largest part of our total attitude. A good deal of the ostentatious neglect of the subject in ordinary life is really

due to the distaste and fear men really have for it. It is not brazen defiance and high-handed impiety that makes men go on as if there were no such thing as death. It is often the shrinking from even thinking of a fact which causes fear and disgust. Because of this life is really weakened and maimed.

Part of the dread comes from false associations. We have never looked death squarely in the face and made up our minds as to what it actually means for us. Our evasion causes the whole subject to be disguised, so that we never see it robbed of its adventitious associations. We confuse the event itself with the manner of its happening. Many when they think of death think of it as the last agony, which is like thinking of life only in terms of the circumstances of birth. Or death is pictured as a ghastly figure with the horrid shears who slits the thin-spun life, a weird and horrid something that puts an end to life. It is associated with suffering and memories of irremediable loss. The imagination morbidly plays round the scenery of the act. Further,

the future after death is thought of as blank homeless darkness, or as the cold horror of the grave. It is a step into the abyss with nameless unimaginable evils, or thought fastens on the gruesome processes that disintegrate the body of clay.

Our common ways of depicting death daunt our courage, so that we never see the fact truthfully. It is no wonder that the whole question is tabooed as much as possible and dismissed from consideration; nor is it wonder that when it must be noted it causes a shudder of distaste and a panic of fear. These common associations have no essential place in the real meaning of the event. The subject is also confused by the age-old questions it raises. We may ask insoluble questions here as elsewhere, but we are not called to answer them. We can assume a definite attitude to life without being able to solve all or any of its enigmas. Indeed the thing of chief importance is our general attitude, and not our failure to answer the questions. So here the chief thing is our attitude, which does not depend on how we attempt to explain the final problems raised by death.

The first fact about the last open door is that through it we are ushered into *the unknown.* All our futile speculations, and crude theories, and pictures of prosaic imagination, and detailed faiths, and denials, leave us precisely as we were. As before, we are still facing the unknown. We know no more about the future after death than the unborn babe knows of the future after birth. The great inevitable experience is an experience of the unknown. This is the chief fact about death, and not the accidental associations with which we usually clothe it. If then this is the one important fact, how it will affect us when we calmly consider it is settled by our usual attitude towards the unknown. If we have learned to dread the unknown, if we have given up the long passion of man and turned back from his endless search, if we have let life harden down to custom and contentment with the usual, we can only view such a radical venture with alarm and dismay. A desperate plunge into the depths of the unknown brings a shudder at the very thought. We cannot conceive of ourselves even for one moment

treasuring a mood which could let us greet the unseen with a cheer. When life itself never attracts us as an adventure, we can only be appalled at the adventure of death.

But if the unknown is welcomed rather than dreaded, if the lesson of the Open Door has been taken to heart by us, the thought of some further unknown does not in itself bring distress. The real distress does not lie for us there at all, but in the breaches it creates in love and fellowship, in the wounds of affection, the end it brings to other hopes and ambitions. The sore distress of death has to do with the old life and with the breaking up of the known. As for the new unknown with which it comes, that has no terrors for the man who courts the unknown. It may be even viewed as the beginning of a new and glorious adventure. It sets wide an entrance into a way where we have not passed heretofore. The one solemn fact is that we can return henceforth no more that way. The bridges are burned.

Death, as we know it, exists for life. One of the arguments for death in the world as we see it is to make room for life, and to keep life

from the static, which would be death in life. Even in the region of man's common endeavours we sometimes say that progress will only come when we have had a few first class funerals. That of course only means that we see some value in death for the sake of other life. May we not go further and believe that there may be meaning and value in death for the life itself that dies? An end in time is nothing in human life. It is the end in purpose that really counts. If the end in purpose is that man should reach ever higher results in character and in all that makes him man, we may well believe that in every sense death exists for life.

This leads us to what may sound like a paradox that life exists for death. The end crowns the work. Without the further experience that we call death, the previous experience of life would be aimless and wasted. Men through religious faith have been able to view death with tranquil eyes, because it was to them the gate into larger life. It is the vestibule of the House of Many Mansions. But meanwhile, without dealing with that larger

and richer faith, we can say that even from the point of view of an inevitable adventure, death may lose some of its terrors, which are really the terrors only of the unknown. We judge a thing by what it leads up to. It is foolish to judge a process by its beginning. A consideration of origins will never give the value of an evolving force. So the thing of importance is not where life came from, but where it issues. The value of life is that it is the only road, which leads to the open door of the new mystery. We need life, that it may usher us to death as to another birth.

Is this too high a note? If we can strike it and hold it, one effect at any rate will be to weaken the fear with which death grips us. Even speaking of death, as we have hitherto been doing, as merely the unknown, without the light of faith on it or the special colour of hope, the king of terrors loses some of his terrifying aspect. As part of the whole adventure of man, it should be met, and can be met, in the same temper as the rest. Death ought to be viewed exactly as life itself is viewed.

We do not know what lies ahead. That is its charm and its lure, unless we are craven and give up in the presence of any unknown. The universe has not exhausted, and never can exhaust, its experiments; and life has not made an end of its experiences. This last open door comes to us with the same lure as any other, and it ought not to stop our breath with dismay.

If we carry also our fundamental faith in life and apply it here, we are only doing what is our right. True we cannot answer the insoluble questions which we ourselves raise, but even answering the questions would not be the same thing as living through them. Here in death as in the rest of life, it is enough to stake our all on the only intelligent hazard that the world means something and that something good. It becomes more and more incredible that the universe is casual something that has just happened. All science builds on the assumption that the cosmic order is rational, and in practice science agrees with Darwin's judgment that if we consider the whole universe the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance. It is incredible that

the universe is diabolic. It might be non-moral, caring neither the one way nor the other for what we call goodness and righteousness and truth, but that it can be evilly disposed is incredible. If we can say that the universe may be unmoral and cares not for what man calls good, it must be because it cares for something bigger, a good higher than our poor conception of it. It is incredible that it could have for its end something less than its own creature. "I will not believe," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "that it is given to man to have thoughts nobler and loftier than the real truth of things." If this is our fundamental faith in life, it must remain our faith in what is the universal experience of life which we call death. We stake our all on the only intelligent hazard we know, namely, that it too has at its heart the highest purpose.

If so we can meet the great adventure with calm courage, if not with glad amaze. We can carry life through to its end in a temper finer than any stoical endurance. There is something heartening about any kind of courage, even the courage which would rather "die

game" than go to pieces in weakness. Stevenson in his essay *Æs Triplex* strikes this virile note when he declares that even if death catch people like an open pitfall in mid career as they are laying out vast projects, there is something brave and spirited in such a termination. "When the Greeks made their fine saying that those whom the gods love die young, I cannot help believing they had this sort of death also in their eye. For surely, at whatever age it overtakes the man, this is to die young. Death has not been suffered to take so much as an illusion from his heart. In the hot-fit of life, a-tiptoe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound on the other side. The noise of the mallet and chisel is scarcely quenched, the trumpets are hardly done blowing, when, trailing with him clouds of glory, this happy-starred, full-blooded spirit shoots into the spiritual land."

When the courage has deeper roots in faith, it comes to even finer flower. When the happy-starred full-blooded spirit builds his life on a world, where he feels sure that the highest

spiritual values cannot perish, where he believes that the things he counts most precious are precious to God, he makes not only great dying but great living. This faith is the seed-plot of immortality. It ceases to be mere hypothesis; for it has the verification of actual test. It works in life, creating the greatest thing which we know on earth, *personality;* producing the most permanent thing of which we have experience, *character;* and giving authority to the highest purpose to which we bow, the *service* that can even command sacrifice. The faith confirms itself by its results, as the tree is known by its fruits. The essence of the Christian position is that human life is the fruit of purpose, and that it is a purpose of love, a purpose to redeem. Standing on that we find courage, and know peace, and have a foretaste even of joy. We can believe that the future will only contain what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

The belief that the last adventure has an issue may find support in many quarters, but has its real seat in a living faith in spiritual

values. It does not depend on scientific doctrines and lines of proof and scientific analogies. It does not rest on philosophical arguments, such as the fact of personality; nor does it hang on moral arguments, such as the passion for justice which lies deep in the hot heart of man; nor does it trust to any or all of the facts of life which call for a future. All that scientific arguments can do is to show that there is no abstract impossibility of the soul surviving the shock of bodily death. All that the other arguments do is to make immortality reasonable, or desirable, or probable. But it really rests on the facts of the spiritual life, facts which have made the faith universal, and have made it persist through all the crises of doubt and denial. Men attained it by a necessity of their moral and spiritual history, and cannot give it up without giving up all their past and all their future.

We do not know the real truth of things, but we can without difficulty affirm that our thoughts cannot be nobler and loftier than the real truth itself. We can easily conceive that the real truth is vastly different from our

petty conceptions, but not that it is grossly inferior. We throw ourselves on that assurance with courage and hope. Whatever the real truth is, however it transcends expectation, it is not only better than our poor imagining—it is *the best!* Before the last open door, as before any other we have known, we are sure that the fact is more wonderful than our thought of it. In this attitude we trust life, and in it we trust death. For lack of this we are weak where we might be strong, and timid where courage should inspire us. It is not before death alone that we find men waver and falter. There are possibly more people afflicted by the fear of life than by any fear of death. They are oppressed by the dread of nameless ills, full of anxiety about the future, dismayed before any prospect of change. Indeed often we find men so tired of life, so afraid of its possibilities, that they lose all fear of the last great enemy and welcome it as a happy release. The last adventure is only the last of a series, and it can be met in the same spirit as the rest. If we have learned to trust life, we can trust its future issue.

Everything therefore depends on our fundamental faith. This may be something other than the items of our professed creed. It means the things by which we are really living, and represents the solid ground on which we stand. It is not a metaphysical statement of our belief, but our practical outlook on life. Our faith can be known and tested by what we actually believe about ourselves as easily as by what we believe about the world and God. This at least can be said with certainty that man cannot be merely the child of time if he stands to God in the relation which Jesus asserted. We come to faith in a future life, not by a process of reasoning on so-called scientific analogies, but by accepting that relation.

This further narrows the question down to our view of the essential features of human nature. If we have a mean conception of our own real nature, we can also deny a future life. These two subjects are sides of the same thing. The absolutely convincing ground of our great faith is that we accept ourselves at our highest, when we feel it to be natural and inevitable that the eternal within us should

claim kinship with the eternal outside us. If in spite of appearing to be, in Hamlet's words, noble in reason and infinite in faculty, this paragon of animal be but a quintessence of dust, if all our moral and spiritual intuitions be but foolish dreams and all our moral and spiritual history be a vain imagination, then we can calmly acquiesce in the doom of annihilation. Nothing else is fit for such a futile and petty being. But if we accept the essential dignity of human nature in spite of all the flaws and sins, we are compelled to believe in eternal life. It is the only adequate sphere for such powers and capacities as man possesses. The very flaws and imperfections become prophecies of a true and full realization.

Man the spirit, with his aspirations and ideals and deep feelings and fluttering hopes and all the high possibilities of character and intellect and holiness, cannot die. Did the world after great travail make us what we are, touching us to infinite longings after knowledge, after progress, after love, after beauty, move us even with hunger and thirst after righteousness—only to mock us at the last? Does life

take a man, endowing him with inchoate capacities, opening vistas of thought and wonder, giving him memory and imagination, planting in him keenest sensibilities and deathless hopes, lighting his torch from the light of eternal truth, quickening in him high thoughts and noble passions, dowering his heart with the love of love itself, luring him with visions of perfect spiritual communion—only to plunge him at the last in extinction, as a candle gutters itself out in an empty socket? After the age-long progress and the long story which we dimly trace, we cannot believe that it will go for nothing and be swept over like a child's house of cards. If there be no goodness at the heart of the universe, it is hard to see how anything we can call goodness could have arisen in man.

The general attitude to life, suggested by the figure of the Open Door, is plain. Of all the needs of man the biggest need is that he should be sure that there is a place for him in God's purpose, that there is a sphere of service for his life, and meaning in all that he is and does. With this he has not only a dignified

present but also a sure future. He is nowhere being led into a blind alley. Without this assured hope, life at any time can become meaningless, cut off with its ragged edge left. Our poor little lives need to be related to the great life of the world, and our petty personal purposes need to be related to a great purpose. The greatest purpose we know, both for our personal character and for our social future, is summed up in the ideal the Kingdom of God, as it filled the heart of our Master. The door into that Kingdom is open to every son and daughter of man. To make submission of heart and life here is the demand of religion, and the result is enlargement beyond all expectation. Men sometimes have thought of religion as something to be gained at long last and at great cost. They have thought that they might squeeze through a door at the end and enter in with the gasp of a struggling soul, falling prostrate at the threshold. All the time the door stands open wide, into liberty and love and peace and truth, and a great and effectual door of service.

Printed in the United States of America

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BD 431 .B53 1914

Black, Hugh, b. 1868.

The open door

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